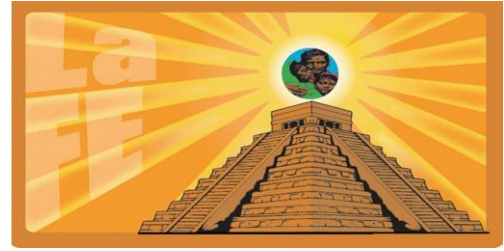




# La Fe Policy Research and Education Center



*Promoviendo Bienestar para Familias y Comunidad con Conocimiento, Confianza y Poder  
Promoting Family and Community Well-Being through Knowledge, Trust, and Empowerment*

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## Texas Policy Legacy: A Powerless Latino Underclass

By Juan H. Flores

Latino and Black families are being regulated to a generational and permanent underclass population status. The history of Texas' minimalist approach to policymaking has perpetuated limited human capital investments, and unequal opportunities to achieve family *bienestar*<sup>1</sup> (well-being) – real middle-class equivalency.

The state's low national investment rankings in education, employment incomes, health, homeownership, and the environment are examples. As a result, the foundations for enabling the American dream, and increased civic participation are impeded for many Texans, particularly Latino and Black families.

A white supremacy ideology among elected officials and leadership further worsens the minimalist policymaking that supports voter suppression, election district gerrymandering, gender, and immigrant xenophobia. The damaging effects on family stability are demonstrated in educational achievement, occupational representation, low incomes, incarceration rates, and poor health disparities in communities across the state.

To illustrate, Texas education enrollment trends reflect a multi-racial and multicultural environment, with students of color now as the majority. There were 5.4 million children enrolled in Texas public schools in the 2021-22 school year. The Fall 2021 enrollment headcount in higher education was 1,551,000. Students of color comprised 72.2% and 59.9% of public school and higher education enrollment, respectively. Latino enrollment was 52.7% and 40%, respectively. This trend has significant state economic implications, as detailed in numerous research and media reports over the past decades.

Despite the education enrollment trends, empirical research, and media reports, the calls for education investments are limited. However, damaging legislative and divisive policy actions are strongly supported by legislative leaders. Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick, and house and senate legislative leaders are demonstrating racialized, inequitable, and underclass-perpetuating policy actions.

Examples include:

- ❖ A private voucher scheme with the use of public school funds.

## Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition Urges State Leaders to Oppose Private Voucher Schemes

<https://www.texasmonthly.com/news-politics/campaign-to-sabotage-texas-public-schools/>

- ❖ Texas' SB3 class censorship law (2021 87<sup>th</sup> legislative session) prevents classroom instruction and certain school conversations about race, gender, and systemic oppression.

### Texas' Newest Classroom Censorship Bill: SB 3

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/2021/07/15/anti-critical-race-theory-bill-heads-to-senate-after-teachers-assail-it-as-censorship/>

- ❖ Obstacles to Effective Implementation of Ethnic Studies in Public Schools

<https://www.idra.org/resource-center/texas-state-board-of-education-votes-to-keep-outdated-social-studies-standards-and-delay-new-ethnic-studies/>

<https://remezcla.com/features/culture/tejas-the-fight-for-ethnic-studies/>

- ❖ Book Bans that will restrict teaching about respect for people's differences, and learning the truth about historical biases, discrimination, and contributions among people of color.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/dfw/news/texas-leads-the-nation-in-book-bans-a-new-report-says/>

<https://www.texastribune.org/2022/09/19/texas-book-bans/#:~:text=The%20report%20released%20on%20Monday%20found%20that%20school,its%20content%20after%20challenges%20from%20parents%20or%20lawmakers.>

- ❖ Elimination of Texas Tuition Law that expands educational opportunities for students of color, and supports higher education revenue needs.

<https://www.idra.org/resource-center/idra-files-amicus-brief-in-fifth-circuit-on-behalf-of-student-business-and-higher-education-organizations-in-a-reckless-case-challenging-texas-tuition-laws/>

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/2022/04/13/what-to-know-about-texas-fight-over-college-tuition-for-undocumented-and-out-of-state-students/>

- ❖ The elimination of diversity education and inclusion policies and activities that contribute to college admission, and faculty hiring.

[https://www.texastribune.org/2023/02/14/texas-diversity-hiring/?mc\\_cid=244213c8e8&mc\\_eid=e0d197fc20](https://www.texastribune.org/2023/02/14/texas-diversity-hiring/?mc_cid=244213c8e8&mc_eid=e0d197fc20)

- ❖ Denying immigrant children access to public education.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/05/us/texas-schools-undocumented-immigrants-supreme-court.html>

- ❖ Texas Legacy in Underfunding Public Education

#### Public Education Reality Check

“In 2016, state education spending was about \$49.1 billion in adjusted dollars, with an average daily school attendance of 4.9 million. For 2023, the projected figure is \$47.9 billion, even though attendance is up to 5.4 million.”<sup>2</sup>

Arguably, there’s a counter to whether there is a white supremacy agenda to the preceding education and other human capital investment policies. The facts remain that they are harmful to Latino, Black, and low-income children, and families. The *truths* of their effect are in the historical and ongoing inequalities and disparities among families of color.

When will Texas’ minimal human capital investments policymaking significantly change? Certainly not with the current 88<sup>th</sup> legislative priorities supported by state political leaders:

- Cutting property taxes
- Ending COVID-19 restrictions “forever”
- Expanding school choice
- Making schools safer
- Ending “revolving door” bail policies
- Securing the state’s border with Mexico
- Cracking down on fentanyl
- Transgender Ban’s
- Banning diversity, equity, and inclusion in public institutions
- Restoring voter fraud to a felony
- Keeping our schools safe and secure
- Expanding alternatives to abortion
- Banning local COVID-19 mandates
- Protecting Children from obscene books in libraries

Hundreds of bills corresponding to the preceding policy priorities have been filed. Taken together, they may not be considered overt racism or Jim Crow of the pass; however, white supremacy is in full bloom in Texas today. It is demonstrated in the ideology behind legislative and policy action by far-right political extremism leadership.

Latinos and allies are engaged in defeating white supremacy-supported bills while supporting those focused on equitable progressive human capital investment that can expand economic mobility opportunities. The extremist political leadership and disadvantaged Latino political power to influence transformative change to the state’s policymaking ideology is formidable.

Despite the clear demographic, economic, and cultural contributions of Texas Latinos, it seems that our voice is still relegated to secondary status and has been unable to overcome narrow views, stereotypes, and deeply rooted racial sentiments and fears.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bienestar* is defined as a perceived quality of life status among individuals, families, and communities affected by social, environmental, and systemic factors. It also embodies social justice concerns given the Latino experience with institutionalized racism and harmful public policies.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.expressnews.com/politics/article/greg-abbott-claims-texas-school-funding-student-17774795.php>