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# 'Teach our history':

## Students, faculty protest Youngkin racial literacy course reviews

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Audience Editor

VCU's NAACP chapter was joined by University of Richmond and Henrico chapters and legislators representing Richmond on Saturday, April 6, to "say no to Governor Youngkin's interference in our history and education," their poster reads.

Youngkin's Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera requested in February to view syllabi for 11 courses teaching VCU's repeatedly delayed racial literacy core curriculum requirement, a move faculty called "unprecedented," according to a previous report by Capital News Service.

If the requirement is implemented, every student will need to take a course focusing on systematic racism, diversity, equity and inclusion. Two racial literacy courses are already being taught, but are not required, being CSIJ 200: Introduction to Race and Racism in the United States and AMST 216: Reading Race.

Youngkin's spokesperson Christian Martinez said the administration took notice of the issue after hearing concerns from parents, students and members of the Board of Visitors. He called the curriculum mandate a "thinly veiled attempt to incorporate the progressive left's groupthink on Virginia's students," in a statement released to several news organizations.

The fate of the racial literacy requirement is unclear. The courses are currently undergoing an approval process that won't be finalized until August, according to the provost. The courses will meet the number of faculty needed to teach them in order to be implemented.

The majority of the VCU BOV will be Youngkin appointees by August. The Board approves faculty appointments, tenure decisions and curriculum changes. They also make recommendations to retain "academic quality," according to their bylaws.

Students and faculty marched from the office of the provost — which complied with Youngkin's requests — to the Virginia Executive Mansion chanting, "No erasure, no disguise! Teach the truth, open eyes!" and "Black books matter!" Students held signs that read "Teach our history" and "Forget Fotis, not racial literacy."

Ana Edwards, an African American Studies professor teaching one of the not-yet-required racial literacy courses, marched alongside students down Franklin Street. She said Provost Fotis Sotiropoulos' complacency with Youngkin's intimidation shows a lack of commitment to the requirement.

"For many people, the purpose of higher education remains serving the status quo," Edwards said. "Every generation of you that comes along is challenging that."

Higher education is not just about training to get a job, but about "opening portals to power," Edwards said.

"When we stand here, and we say 'forget Fotis, not racial literacy' and we talk about Governor Youngkin trying to keep back two-thirds of our history, demanding democracy for all, where is our academic freedom?" Edwards said.



Anesia Lawson, vice president of VCU's NAACP chapter, marches down Franklin Street on Saturday, April 6. Photo by Andrew Kerley. Collage by Olivia McCabe.



VCU and University of Richmond students pose in front of the Capitol Square Bell Tower.

(Top of page) Students and Richmonders march around Capitol Square.

Photos by Andrew Kerley.

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