

An exchange between Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark) and Jill Hruby, the Joe Biden administrator's nominee to be administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), in a May 27 confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.): What was your involvement in the incorporation of critical race theory or diversity equity and inclusion training at the Sandia National Labs?

Jill Hruby: Sen. Cotton, thanks for that question. I'm a strong believer in diversity equity and inclusion training for our workforce and in fact, study after study shows that the culture of institutions is a reason why we lose top talent, and particularly, women and people of color. So my first statement is I'm a strong supporter, and have benefited greatly personally, and been part of an institution that's benefited greatly, from diversity, equity and inclusion training.

The issues with the Sandia divisive training occurred after I left the laboratory and I understand it has been reviewed and if confirmed I look forward to evaluating those reviews and making sure that we have high-quality training programs that will continue into the future.

C: Ms. Hruby I have heard from concerned former NNSA officials and lab workers who said these controversial training regimens were conducted under your watch. Did you direct or participate in any of what you just called divisive training sessions?

H: I did participate in training, diversity, equity and inclusion training, at the laboratories. The training that I participated in I never considered divisive, nor did I hear that from any employee that participated in the training at the laboratory while I was there.

C: Did you personally participate in any training that instructed white employees to "deconstruct their white culture" or to apologize for bigotries or prejudices that they did not commit?

H: No Senator, we, the classes did explore privilege, but in my opinion they never were divisive or asked inappropriate questions of apologies of the white workforce.

C: Do you believe that any race is inherently prejudiced, bigotted or oppressive?

H: No, sir.

C: Do you believe that any race is inherently victimized or oppressed?

H: No, sir.

C: Do you see any inherent danger in telling highly skilled technicians who control one of the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons in the world that they are working for a country whose roots are founded on systemic racism?

H: Well, no, I don't, but I do think we need to be open to the issues that exist and that the cultures that exist that don't allow us to fully utilize all Americans in our science and technology enterprise.

C: So you don't see any danger in teaching these technicians that are in charge of our nuclear stockpiles that America is a fundamentally or systematically racist country?

H: I do not think America is a fundamentally racist country.

C: And so, therefore, you would also not permit any such training in the agency should you be confirmed?

H: That is correct, I would want to make sure all of our training was high-quality.

C: Thank you. I think we can all agree that if you're an American, no matter your race, sex, creed, preference, and that you're, especially if you're gifted in fields like math, physics, chemistry or engineering that we want you and we need you at the NNSA, but I hope that we also treat our workforce with respect and don't subject any of these highly trained professionals to this very foolish kind of training that teaches them that one race is inherently guilty by birth or one race is inherently oppressed by birth or that America is somehow a fundamentally racist or irredeemable or hateful country. I would suggest that's a very bad way to chase out some of our very best employees and put them into the arms of the private sector. So, thank you very much for your answers today and thank you all for your appearance.