

The Truth about Critical Race Theory, and Why We Need to Keep It Out of Classrooms

What is Critical Theory?

Before we understand Critical Race Theory (CRT) specifically, we have to understand critical theory more broadly. Critical theory is a term that encompasses various theories through which one can view the world. Such theories include deconstructivism, structuralism, post-structuralism, feminism and queer theory, postcolonialism, Marxism, and more.

The best way to understand these theories is to think of them as lenses through which we can view the world. But much like looking through a camera lens, when we look at the world through critical theory, our focus will narrow, and much of our view will become blurred. CRT is one such lens.

What is the purpose of CRT?

The general purpose of CRT is to determine *how race relates to class and power*. CRT builds off Marxist theories of class and power, adding the racial element, but sticks close to its Marxist roots. You'll notice many proponents of CRT also advocate for Marxism/socialism.

CRT is used to discover how we view and enable racism in society. But more practically, the end goal of CRT is to "dismantle" systems of racial oppression. In short, here are some of the defining principles of CRT:

- racism only applies to those in a position of power and privilege
- white people are in a position of power and therefore all white people have inherent privilege
- "whiteness" and "eurocentric" ideals are irrevocably corrupt
- to eradicate racism, we must dismantle the systems that enable power dynamics
- colorblindness is a form of racism that ignores racial prejudices
- all people are merely members of a socially constructed group, not free-thinking individuals
- all people belong to either an oppressed or oppressor group
- people may belong to multiple groups, a concept known as *intersectionality*
- we must make reparations for historically disadvantaged groups
- equity is priced over equality

Misconceptions about CRT

1. CRT is not being implemented at the elementary and secondary levels.

Because CRT originated as a graduate-level theory, often used when discussing law, literature, and the humanities more broadly, many people refute the idea that CRT is coming to our public schools. They believe the theory is in some way contained within academia. But just as feminism, queer theory, and Marxism have trickled down to the K-12 education system, so has CRT in its own simplified way.

First, many K-12 schools have already implemented [the 1619 Project curriculum](#), which, according to its own description, “challenges us to reframe U.S. history.” The project’s thesis claims that the founding of America was the outcome of white slaveowners wanting to protect slavery. However, in [an open letter to the New York Times](#), five historians refuted and disproved this claim, and Leslie M. Harris, a professor of history and African American studies, highlighted the many [factual errors](#) of this curriculum.

Though many schools have already implemented curriculum like the 1619 Project, some institutions, such as the National School Boards Association (NSBA), [still deny that CRT is being taught in schools](#). And while schools may not necessarily be directly teaching on critical theory, they are assigning books that subtly (and not-so-subtly) promote its ideals.

The University of Phoenix curated [this list](#) for educators of Pre-K–12 students to discuss social justice in the classroom. Themes of race, white privilege, and institutional racism (as well as sex and gender) are found across all grades.

2. CRT fights racism and promotes inclusion.

While many claim the goal of CRT is to fight racism, the outcome seems to be the opposite. In fact, critics of CRT are pointing out that segregation has become an unintended (or potentially intended) consequence of the theory.

One Atlanta mother was shocked to discover that her daughter’s elementary school had placed her into the “[Black-only class](#),” which the school claimed was created to give black students more opportunities. A [Wisconsin high school](#) hosted discussions in which [students and parents were segregated](#) into race-based groups. At the college level, universities such as Washington University, American University, Stanford University, the University of Colorado at Boulder, and Cornell University have created [segregated, Black-only dorms](#).

3. CRT finally allows students to study true history.

Considering that the biggest CRT-based curriculum, the 1619 Project, has already been [discredited](#), it is unquestionably wrong to say that CRT allows students to study true history.

But one misconception many people still hold is that banning CRT must mean banning (or even minimizing) Black history. This is simply not true. Banning CRT does not mean banning lessons on Jim Crow, slavery, or racism, nor does it mean educators must stop framing such institutions as inherently wrong and unjustifiable.

In fact, banning CRT actually allows for a more accurate portrayal of Black history. Because the CRT narrative narrowly focuses on the victimization of minorities in America, CRT-based lessons lead one to believe that Black success in America was (and is) unobtainable. It ultimately requires educators to ignore or gloss over the great success of Black Americans in the 1800s, people like Booker T. Washington, James Forten, Samuel T. Wilcox, William Alexander Leidesdorff, Jr., Dr. Rebecca Lee Crumpler, and so many more.

So what do we do?

For many of us, it is clear CRT has no place in the K–12 classroom. But we cannot sit idly and expect these backward ideas to go away. Many parents may say, ‘it’s not in *my* school,’ to which I reply, maybe not yet, but it is coming.

Some counties have taken a proactive approach, banning CRT from ever entering the classroom. But that requires educators and parents speak up now, before our children are indoctrinated under our noses.

Some parents have resorted to private schools, religious schools, or homeschooling. But for those who cannot, they must understand the fight that lay ahead of them in public education.

Take action today by calling and writing your elected officials, let them know that CRT has no place in our education system. We need to be teaching our children how to think, not what to think!