

# Critical Race Theory's Corrosive Effects on American Principles and Traditions

*Mike Gonzalez*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Critical race theory is not just a philosophy or legal discipline. It is a tool that the left is using to tear down America and change society.

Using CRT in classrooms, workplaces, the military, and even houses of worship violates civil rights laws and the Constitution itself.

We need to teach all aspects of our history, address the problems of our poor communities, and end all discrimination, but CRT stands in the way of true progress.

**T**hank you for inviting me to speak. I can't tell you how much of a high honor it is for me to be invited to speak to the NAACP, an organization whose work I admire, even when I disagree with it. Your decades-long defense of human dignity and of the right of all Americans to benefit from equal treatment speaks to the highest values that this country has to offer.

My criticism of critical race theory fits exactly within that centuries-old tradition of demanding that government treat us all equally, regardless of what race the Census Bureau has decided we are. There is common ground between us—trust me—but CRT isn't it.

I believe that critical race theory is corrosive of American principles and traditions and of laws that all Americans, but especially black Americans, fought for centuries to force the government to create and implement.

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The application of CRT's tenets in our schools, in our offices, in our military, and even in houses of worship is violative of these laws. It breaches several aspects of the Constitution and the Civil Rights Act, including the First and Fourteenth amendments and Titles VI and VII. Therefore, all elected officials across this land have a responsibility to eradicate such practices, and I am happy to have worked with officials from different states who have passed anti-CRT legislation.

In the case of your state, I know there is a proposal regarding CRT. If I had advised on this proposal, I would have cautioned against stripping the proposal of anything that would protect parents and children from discrimination.

It is for these reasons that I travel the country speaking to parents and legislatures about CRT. CRT is not about teaching the contribution of black Americans or immigrants like me to the making of America. I consider it a tragedy that children graduate high school without any idea of who Frederick Douglass and Bernardo de Galvez were.

Nor is CRT about fixing the problems of impoverished Americans, whatever their race or national origin. If that were the case, I would defend CRT. Nor is it about solving discrimination.

CRT is self-consciously not just a philosophy or a legal discipline, as those desperately fighting to save it today insist. No, CRT is a tool to change society, another instrument to tear down the narrative of American history and culture and replace it with a counternarrative.

## What Is Critical Race Theory?

Perhaps we should start by answering the question: What is critical race theory? I will use here the definitions given by the architects of CRT.

None other than Harvard professor Derrick Bell, long recognized as the godfather of CRT, put it this way: "As I see it, critical race theory recognizes that revolutionizing a culture begins with the radical assessment of it."<sup>1</sup>

This idea that CRT was to be used to transform American society is indeed central to its devotees. This aspect of CRT is underlined by all its creators, from Kimberlé Crenshaw, the godmother, if you will, of the movement, on down.

Another trait central to CRT is the idea that society is oppressive, that the rich and the powerful have manipulated concepts to create a reality that hides from the rest of us the fact that we are oppressed. All the critical theories believe that it is the job of their practitioners to open our eyes to our own subjugation and in that way to lead us to our liberation.

“All liberation depends on our consciousness of servitude,” wrote the critical theorist Herbert Marcuse. When we don’t understand our own oppression, we have “false consciousness.”<sup>2</sup>

This false consciousness is to be eradicated through the so-called anti-racism trainings that our children and employees are currently being subjected to. I say “so-called” because in my opinion, some of these programs are quite racist in themselves.

The practitioners of CRT separate the people in the classroom, office, or shop floor into racial and/or sexual categories. They teach that “Perfectionism, punctuality, urgency, niceness, worship of the written word, progress, objectivity, rigor, individualism, capitalism and liberalism are some of the characteristics of white-supremacy culture in need of elimination,” as *The Wall Street Journal* reported just last week.<sup>3</sup>

They teach the works of Ibram X. Kendi, a popular practitioner of CRT, who believes that we need to have racial discrimination in the present and in the future. I struggle to understand what separates Kendi from the racist Southern governor who stood at the schoolhouse door proclaiming that the South would have segregation forever.

What else is CRT? Well, let’s look at the main elements that one of the main architects of CRT, Richard Delgado of the University of Alabama’s Law School, chose to include in his primer on the subject, which is called *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*.

The first is that racism in America is systemic, not an individual sin or crime, but embedded in “the ‘ordinary business’ of society.”<sup>4</sup> One can find racism in “normal science,” Delgado says, putting that term inside scare quotes. One can find it in “the usual way society does business.”<sup>5</sup>

The fact that racism is systemic is why Derrick Bell says that CRT must be revolutionary. If the system is racist, then the logical thing to do is eliminate the system. You can’t just sit around and improve the system. The remedy must be totalizing.

The second tenet of CRT that Delgado discusses is interest convergence. All whites, rich and poor, benefit from racism and thus have little incentive to eradicate it.

This is nothing but an indictment of humanity and human nature. No one that I know wants a racially unfair system. Everyone’s chest fills with pride when someone rises from poverty and attains wealth, status, or stardom because of her own ability. And in America more than anywhere else in the world, we see this very thing happen every single day.

There seems to be no appealing to better angels under this grievances-filled approach to life. Its job is deliberately to stoke resentment.

Yes, of course, there are ugly racists in America, as there are the world over. I have lived at least a year in seven different countries, in more if you count the places where I have lived a few months. Let me assure you that racism is, very sadly, a universal condition. But the ideas that America is uniquely racist or systemically racist, or that whites don't want others to advance, simply does not square with the America that exists today.

Another tenet of CRT is intersectionality, or the idea that we have different layers of marginalization that can make us a victim of societal oppression several times over. Intersectionality is a concept that was first enunciated by Crenshaw, a Columbia School of Law professor who also first came up with the term critical race theory, in 1989.

A final element, says Delgado, is the idea that, because of "their different histories and experiences with oppression, black, Indian, Asian, and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know." Then Delgado adds for emphasis, "Minority status, in other words, brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism."<sup>6</sup>

This mentality quickly devolves into essentialism and numerical proportionalism. Essentialism is the idea that members of a race or group have a number of behavioral attributes that are inherent to their race or group, whereas numerical proportionalism is the idea that every classroom, court, office or plant shop must reflect the exact ethnic, racial, and sexual proportion that obtains in the country, or at least in a given locality.

In practice, Delgado's "presumed competence" quickly unraveled into ill will. Delgado for example, took it upon himself to drive white males away from the field of civil rights, going so far as to call those who refused to leave "imperialists."

## An Ideology of Conformity

But lest we think it really was a matter of the numerical participation by race and skin tone, let me assure you: *It wasn't*. Everything was really about ideology. When George H. W. Bush appointed Justice Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, Derrick Bell reacted with what can only be described as an epic tantrum. I shudder to repeat what Bell wrote at the time, but here is but a small part of it.

[T]he choice of a black like Clarence Thomas replicates the slave masters' practice of elevating to overseer and other positions of quasi-power those slaves willing to mimic the masters' views, carry out orders, and by their presence provide a perverse legitimacy to the oppression they aided and approved.<sup>7</sup>

I ask you, in all sincerity: Is this really how we want to speak about each other? This type of dehumanizing rhetoric is *not* intended to encourage dialogue. It is intended to shut it down.

It also shows that, contrary to the claim that CRT merely calls for all races to be represented at the table, CRT is but a Potemkin Village, a false façade. What the architects of CRT really seek—starting with its most important founders—is ideological conformity *around the views of the left*. Justice Thomas, Winsome Sears, and Thomas Sowell need not apply.

That is because, as I have said, Professors Bell, Crenshaw, and Delgado made it abundantly clear that CRT is an instrument to transform society. The idea is to tear down the conceptual structure of the present and erect a rival, counterhegemonic narrative, to jettison the American system (because it is systemically racist) and replace it with something else entirely different, something Marxist.

## “A Bunch of Marxists”

Which brings us to another point: Today’s defenders of CRT constantly dismiss the idea that CRT is a Marxist construct. They should take it up with the architects of CRT. Delgado described the founding conference of CRT in 1989, in a convent near Madison, Wisconsin, in the following manner:

So we gathered at that convent for two and a half days, around a table in an austere room with stained glass windows and crucifixes here and there—an odd place for a bunch of Marxists—and worked out a set of principles.<sup>8</sup>

Delgado, I assure you, is by no means the only CRT founder who is quite comfortable affirming his Marxist orientation.

Some of you who are young and have not been taught Marxism may ask yourselves, “Well, what is so wrong about Marxism?” Let me assure you that it is one of the most crippling philosophies man has ever devised. It promises to take away your property and to use state terror in the process—Marx actually promises these things—but it also ends up taking away your soul.

## Implementing CRT in the Schools

Let me finish by also dismissing another falsehood that today’s proponents of CRT spread, and that is that it is not taught in K–12 schools or used in so-called anti-racism trainings at the office. It may be the case that third graders are not required to read 9,000-word papers by Bell, Crenshaw, or

Angela Harris, but let me assure you: The programs and curricula being implemented in schools are very much guided by the tenets of CRT.

- When Evanston, Illinois, mother Ndona Mboyayi decries the fact that her son, who was once filled with ambition and wanted to be a teacher, now comes home and says, “But Mommy, there are these systems put in place that prevent Black people from accomplishing anything” and that the school’s narrative is “you can’t get ahead,” that is classic CRT. It was none other than Derrick Bell who wrote, “Black people will never gain full equality in this country.”<sup>9</sup>
- And when an advisory board in Virginia’s Loudoun County Public School District demanded that teachers be dismissed if they criticize the district’s equity training inspired by critical race theory, that is CRT.
- Or when a New York City private school teacher is publicly shamed for not supporting a curriculum built around racial identity, that is CRT. Racial identity is a building block of CRT.
- Or when a Smithsonian museum has an exhibit that says that the nuclear family, rational thinking, and hard work belong to so-called white culture, that is CRT’s essentialism. And it is also false and very ugly.

## Conclusion

There is common ground, much common ground, between us. I want black history taught; I want to fix the problems of poor communities; and I—like the overwhelming majority of our countrymen—want discrimination banished forever.

I hope there can be common ground between us here. We both want the same thing: a fair shot at the American Dream. But CRT, sadly, does none of those things. It is not intended to.

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## Endnotes

1. Derrick A. Bell, "Who's Afraid of Critical Race Theory?" *University of Illinois Law Review*, Vol. 1995, No. 4, p. 893, <https://racism.org/articles/law-and-justice/405-law-policies-and-race/critical-race-theory/9591-who-s-afraid> (accessed April 29, 2022).
2. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), pp. 9 and 13, <https://www.cs.vu.nl/~eliens/download/marcuse-one-dimensional-man.pdf> (accessed April 29, 2022).
3. Andrew Gutmann and Paul Rossi, "Inside the Woke Indoctrination Machine," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 11, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/inside-the-woke-indoctrination-machine-diversity-equity-inclusion-bipoc-schools-conference-11644613908> (accessed April 28, 2022).
4. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2001), p. 22.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
7. Derrick A. Bell, Jr., "Racial Realism," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: New Press, 1995), p. 304.
8. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, "Living History Interview with Richard Delgado & Jean Stefancic," *Transnational Law & Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter 2010), p. 225, <https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=faculty> (accessed April 28, 2022).
9. Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 12.