

WHAT IS CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW

CRITICAL RACE THEORY examines how laws in the United States have built and supported racial inequities. It is an ideological framework that names race as a social construct and asserts racialized inequities in society are fostered by historic and current systemic, institutional, and legal policies and practices.

SOME EXAMPLES OF RACIALIZED INEQUITIES INCLUDE

- Past and present immigration policies.
- The forced removal of Native Americans from their lands, their relegation to economically deprived reservations, and the requirement they give up their languages and cultures.
- The legal enslavement of African Americans that prevented them from building generational wealth, learning to read and write, or participating in the political processes until generations later.
- Legal racial segregation (including in The United Methodist Church until 1972 in some U.S. regions).
- Criminal justice policies (e.g. tougher penalties for people convicted of crack cocaine—mostly Black, Brown and poor—versus powdered cocaine—more likely white and economically affluent).
- Redlining practices and land covenants that forbade or discouraged the sale of residential properties to Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and other U.S. residents of color, preventing members of these communities from buying homes and building financial stability that comes with home ownership.



MODERN CRITICAL RACE THEORY

TENETS OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY can be traced back to the "Critical Theory" of the 1930s, which emerged as a critique and challenged society to change power structures.

The modern tenets of Critical Race Theory were formed in the 1980s by U.S. law professors such as Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado and Cheryl Harris.



MODERN CRITICAL RACE THEORY acknowledges that all people are part of the human race and that, in reality, race is not biological but rather a social construct.

However, proponents of the theory assert the following ideas about the social construct of race:

Laws, systems, and institutions—including the church—are not race-neutral, and so ending racial inequity requires a re-examination of history and the reimagining of existing systems.

Simply changing legal rights and being "colorblind" does not guarantee racial equity—in church or society.

Our current social construct of race ascribes more value to white people than to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Racism has historically been—and is currently—embedded in our institutions and systems so that BIPOC communities are still oppressed.

Racism has been ingrained to "normalize" beliefs and practices that benefit white people and penalize BIPOC.

Racial inequity harms both white and BIPOC communities.

MYTHS AND TRUTHS ABOUT CRITICAL RACE THEORY

MYTH: CRT is being taught—or pushed into public school curricula.

TRUTH: CRT is not taught in a single K-12 public school in the United States, according to a recent article in USA Today. Critical Race Theory is taught mainly at college and grad school levels.

MYTH: Teaching about racial inequity is new.

TRUTH: Since the 1940s, many public K-12 children have been taught our nation's history of Native American genocide, the legal enslavement of African Americans, the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act, and the WWII internment of Japanese Americans. Many modern K-12 curricula include lessons on the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez and the Latinx farmworkers movement, South African apartheid, Nazi atrocities under Adolph Hitler, etc.

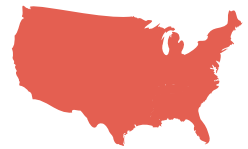


MYTH: CRT is "racist" against white people.

TRUTH: The goal of CRT is to take the focus off blaming individuals and to instead address the institutional and systemic laws, rules, and practices that keep racism in place. The hard truth about systemic racism is that it happens without the action and knowledge of individual persons.

MYTH: CRT seeks to divide our nation.

TRUTH: Our church and nation are already racially divided. Most Christians worship largely in segregated racially homogenous sanctuaries. Conversely, one of the main drivers of diversity in inter-racial Christian congregations typically become so because they are doing the hard work of acknowledging and confessing the sin and harm of racism. As such, they are following Jesus in uniting across racial lines, engaging in anti-racism work in order to help heal their communities and their churches.



MYTH: Color-blindness and not focusing on race is the best way to address racism.

TRUTH: God created humanity in all skin colors, languages, and cultures. Knowing and speaking about differences is not divisive. Rather, it is individual and systemic bias benefiting one group of God's people over another that causes division and strife.

MYTH: CRT is anti-Christian and conflicts with Biblical teaching.

TRUTH: CRT is one method for examining how social systems operate, with the goal of discovering what works and what doesn't when it comes to improving the human condition. For persons of faith seeking to know and do God's will, it can be helpful to find tangible ways to work toward greater racial reconciliation, whereby all God's people can flourish here on earth.



RELIGION & RACE
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