
CRITICAL RACE THEORY: FRIEND, FOE, OR OPPORTUNITY?

**A WEBINAR SPONSORED BY THE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE FORMATION,
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WHY EXPLORE CRITICAL RACE THEORY?: KEY BIBLICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

- ❑ To explore and promote truth, because truth always matters (John 17:3, 17; Psalms 100:5).
- ❑ To expose popular delusions, vain myths, and misguided pretensions (II Corinthians 10:3-6); II Timothy 3)
- ❑ To increase empathy (James/Yaacov 3: 13-18). See also James 2: 1-14 regarding prejudice/discrimination.
- ❑ To expose manipulative leaders and dangerous personalities (Ezekiel 34; Matthew 23).
- ❑ To heal the wounds of history, giving beauty for ashes (Luke 4: 18-19)
- ❑ To promote biblical justice (Micah 6:8), because injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere (MLK, Jr.)



ORIGINS OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY: CONTEXT MATTERS!

TOOLS FOR ANALYZING CONTEXTS

- **Basic heuristic: who, what where, when, how, so what?, under what conditions? [humanities]**
- **Kuhlman's Truth-seeking strategies: scientific contexts, analytical contexts, documentary contexts, and pop culture (media) contexts**
- **Allen Matrix: informal vs. formal levels: individual, group, social network, community/associations, organizations or institutions, subsystems/systems**
- **Feagin's typology: migration, adaptation, inter/intragroup conflict, stereotypes, institutional differentiation/location, identity**
- **Luhmann's model of social systems: difference/diversity, meanings, consciousness, communications**

KEY SOURCES

- Delgado, Richard and Jean Stephanic. **Critical Race Theory, 3rd ed.** New York: New York University Press, 2017.
- Bridges, Khiara. **Critical Race Theory:A Primer.** Foundation Press: St. Paul, MN, 2019.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds. **Critical Race Theory.** (key writings) New York:The New Press, 1996.
- A plethora of recent articles

ORIGINS OF CRT

- **History/conditions [remember the journey!]**
- **Core concepts/assumptions**
- **Key exemplars/proponents**
- **Contributors/implications**
- **Controversies/misinformation/misunderstandings**
- **Misguided motives/moral panics/ideological facades**
- **Salvaging truth (Daniel 12:3): future generations are at stake!!!**

ORIGINS/CONTEXT

- **CRT was an awakening in legal studies, stimulated by Dr. Derrick Bell's life journey (regrettably, decades after W.E.B. DuBois and scholars in sociology/history)**
- **Posits that race is central to understanding U.S. law and policy**
- **Focuses on structures that facilitate racism and its repercussions, beyond interpersonal feelings or interactions**
- **Why did CRT emerge? Implicit biases against the full dimensions of truth and diverse human experiences/ ignorance of sociology/history from an uninformed/unprepared generation of legal scholars**

OTHER SUBTLE SOCIAL FORCES/CONTEXTUAL STIMULI

- **White backlash over social progress [reverse discrimination, anti-affirmative action]**
- **Demographic changes/diversity**
- **Conservative politics/ideology [Nixon's southern strategy; Reagan's welfare queens, Willie Horton ads, symbolic racism, Supreme Court setbacks, etc.]**
- **Conservative jurisprudence, against busing and/or metropolitan school desegregation**
- **Urban blight/urban renewal/urban segregation**
- **American Apartheid (1993)/American Denial (PBS documentary)**
- **Media images/stereotypes + right-wing stupidity + **social media/hate capitalism****

OTHER CONTEXTUAL STIMULI IN SOCIAL SYSTEMS

- **War on Drugs (disproportionate penalties/criminalization for blacks)**
- **Silent/weak church leadership: interpersonal focus, not institutional/neglecting justice (vacuum/devoid of theology for systems)**
- **Economic fears and fluctuations (inflation/recessions/unemployment)**
- **Moral panics/behavioral cascades/sensationalism/Trumpism**
- **Exposing microaggressions/black fatigue**
- **Police violence/implicit biases**

THE CRT PARADIGM

- **Beyond incrementalism and gradualism, CRT engages diverse legal constituencies for transformational scholarship & activism by questioning/critiquing: [Delgado, p. 3]**
 - **Enlightenment rationalism**
 - **Liberal assumptions regarding the social order/policies**
 - **Equality theory**
 - **Legal reasoning**
 - **Neutral principles of constitutional law**

PIVOTAL EXEMPLARS (AMONG MANY OTHERS)

- **Derrick Bell**
- **Richard Delgado**
- **Kimberle Crenshaw**
- **Paul Butler**
- **Lani Guinier**

ECLECTIC SCHOLARSHIP/ANTECEDENTS

- **Critical legal studies (legal indeterminacy)**
- **Radical feminism (patriarchy)**
- **Postmodern scholars (Foucault, Derrida, etc.)**
- **Radical African American, Latinx, and related social movements (black power, etc.)**
- **Ethnic studies (group experiences)**
- **Remedying injustices**

CRT: PERTINENT IMPLICATIONS/CONTRIBUTIONS

- **CRT has been diffused across academic disciplines and nations.**
- **CRT rejects popular notions of color-blindness, since racism is embedded, ordinary, and institutionalized in society. Its direct or indirect effects are typically not acknowledged. It can make dominant groups ‘uncomfortable.’**
- **CRT recognizes that racism facilitates dominant white self-interests in maintaining the status quo of power, status, wealth, and opportunities: white supremacy/racialization!**
- **Race is not biological; it is socially-constructed in human minds/imaginations. The feelings or meanings associated with race are learned and taught.**

FURTHER DISTINCTIVES (DELGADO)

- **Intersectionality** (people have multiple intersecting/overlapping identities, contingencies, and social capital)
- **Antiessentialism** (recognizes unique narratives and perspectives): all lives matter, but not all in the same way!
CRT moves beyond the binary divide: not just black vs. white.
- **Criticality** (not afraid to tackle difficult topics of racial or structural injustice). [*See Chapter 2!]

CONTROVERSIES: I THESSALONIANS 5: 18-21

- **The core issue is the inherent conflict or enduring intergenerational consequences related to institutionalized inequality, injustice, and oppression. For some (not all), Marxism inspires their version of CRT.**
- **CRT does not capture all the intricacies and pathologies of racism in the United States, although it does expose its criminality and historicity.**
- **American lies, ideologies, and mythologies are assessed with critical acumen to discern & decipher truth or authenticity. Some people “can’t handle the truth!”**
- **Those who fear or misunderstand CRT unwittingly champion a conundrum of ignorance, deception, and indolence, intentional or not (I Corinthians 13: 11-13). Hype is not truth. Cognitive development/maturity is always a necessary ingredient for CRT in schooling.**

MISGUIDED MOTIVES?

- **Cover-up/denial of truth (John 8:44)**
- **Culpability (Leviticus 19: 15)**
- **Complicity (James 4:27)– people often benefit from racialization!**
- **Criminality (Proverbs 14:34)**
- **Covetousness (I Timothy 6:10)**
- **Corruption/Sophistry (II Timothy 3:13)**

SALVAGING TRUTH: JOHN 8: 31-32

- **Daniel 12:3**
- **Matthew 5: 13-16**
- **Psalms 100:5**
- **Proverbs 28: 13, 21**
- **James 3:13-18**

REMINDERS

- CRT examines [neglected] narratives/stories and interpretations. **Stories matter!**
- CRT targets the continuing consequences and ramifications of racism (Delgado, pp. 46-49)
- CRT accentuates divergent racial experiences to promote genuine understanding and deep thinking in law/society
- CRT reveals and challenges embedded preconceptions based on biased conjectures and evidence
- CRT accentuates silenced voices in legal domains, exposing neglected microaggressions and inconspicuous traumas

SALIENT QUESTIONS

- **Is CRT all wrong? Why? How? Under what conditions?**
- **Who is responsible for the issues, wrongs, and grievances exposed by CRT?**
- **Remember Einstein's wisdom: Problems cannot be solved with the same level of thinking in which they were created.**
- **Where are the better [more robust or effective] alternatives/solutions offered by the critics of CRT? If critics have a better idea, now is the time.**

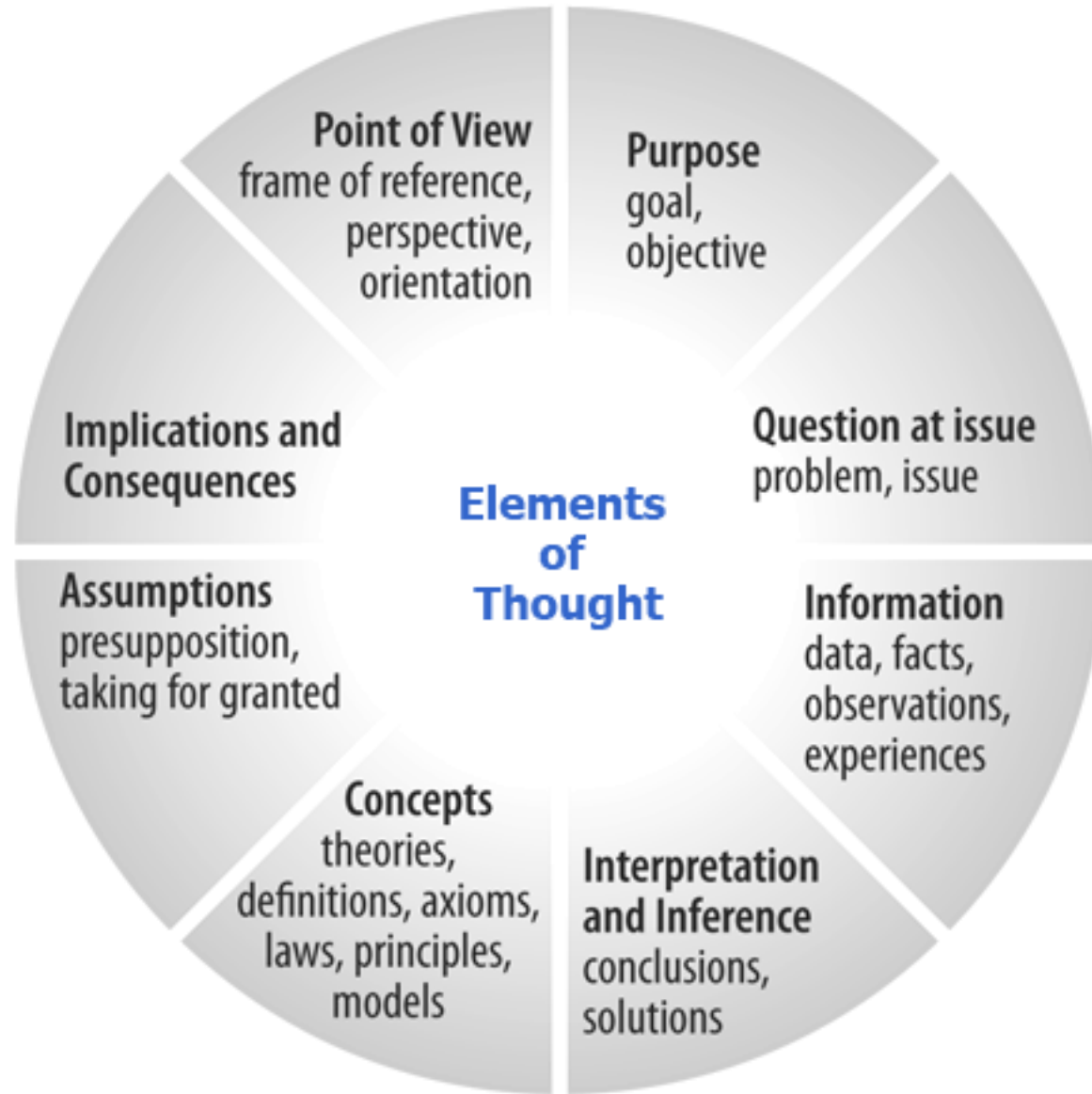
CULTIVATE DISCERNMENT

- **We must combat Truth Decay (Rand Corporation study): lies, misinformation, disinformation, distortions**
- **Media literacy is paramount! [7-second click culture via digital social media]**
- **Critical thinking [Proverbs 4: 20-27] is essential.**
- **Intellect always matters (Proverbs 4:7).**

RECALL MEDIA LITERACY

People retain 60-70% of visual images in their conscious and subconscious minds

Compared to 30% from reading texts



CLOSING REMARKS

- **Many thanks to my sponsors! Go out and pursue biblical justice [Matthew 7:12].**
- ***For any person, group, institution, system, or nation, there can be no authentic, spiritual redemption apart from truth and justice! (Romans 14:17)***