

Critical Race Theory

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Critical Race Theory and the separate but related 1619 Project have been getting a lot of press lately, particularly as regards the teaching of American History in public schools. Unfortunately, many people, almost entirely on the political right, do not have even a small clue as to what CRT is and how it would affect teaching. What follows is a short piece I wrote for the local paper, the *News and Observer*, in hopes of providing some clarity. See below for a link to another essay on the same topic.

Many Republican-led state legislatures are rushing to ban the use of Critical Race Theory in public schools. They apparently have no understanding of CRT and what it means for the teaching of history. If they do, in fact, understand CRT and still oppose it, it reflects very poorly on them.

CRT is a highly abstruse theory meant to inform academic historical scholarship. But it, and the separate but related 1619 Project, have been brought to bear on the teaching of American History in public schools. What does this mean in practical terms? It has nothing to do with shaming white people or teaching students to hate their country. It most certainly has nothing to do with Marxism. These are all conservative fabrications, bugaboos created to scare people. In relation to education, CRT asks nothing more than when teaching American history, the crucial roles that slavery and racial discrimination played, and continue to play, must be part of it, taught accurately and without regard to political opinions.

How might this affect teaching? We teach that the G.I. Bill provided benefits to World War 2 vets but we must also teach that black vets were specifically excluded—as all black people were excluded from many government programs in agriculture, housing, and more. We teach why so many African Americans have an admixture of European and African genes (hint: it was not consensual). We teach about the Wilmington insurrection and the Tulsa massacre and the thousands of lynchings. The Chinese exclusion act and the concentration camps for Japanese-Americans. The centuries-old attempted genocide and stealing of land from the indigenous people.

Yes, the many good things about this country must be taught, too. But the point of teaching history should be to teach what actually happened, with accuracy and without blame or guilt. Only by understanding how we got here can we move on to a better future.

Professor Michael Schwalbe of NC State University wrote this informative essay on the same topic.

<https://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/article252469743.html>
