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PREFACE: TENETS OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Ken Magdaleno
Founder/CEO, CLEAR

The presentation of truth in new forms provokes resistance, confounding those committed to accepted measures for determining the quality and validity of statements made and conclusions reached, and making it difficult for them to respond and adjudge what is acceptable.

Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*

Derek Bell is considered one of the originators of Critical Race Theory along with Richard Delgado, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams. Today we see examples of individuals with limited knowledge of CRT who have been provoked to their own form of resistance reaching conclusions that demonstrate little understanding of the five tenets of CRT which are: counter-storytelling; the permanence of racism; Whiteness as property; interest conversion; and the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; McCoy, 2006).

My introduction to Critical Race Theory was when I became aware that a member of my dissertation committee at UCLA, Dr. Daniel Solorzano, was known for his research in the area of LatCrit (Latino Critical Race Theory) and Counter-storytelling. It was a "tipping point" moment for me as up to that point for I was not aware of the presence of CRT. Dr. Solorzano, along with Dr. Tara Yosso, wrote *Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research*—for the authors, a critical race methodology provides a tool to "counter" deficit storytelling (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Up to that point in my educational career I often wondered and often asked others, "where am I in these history books?" CRT helped me see "the other side of Latino history." I do not exaggerate when I state that Latinos were very often seen in American history as the killers of Davy Crockett at the Alamo, gangs of Zoot Suiters in Los Angeles fighting the patriotic members of the U.S. Navy, or finally, a positive role model in Cesar Chavez who is celebrated with a holiday and Mexican food at school. In truth, counter-storytelling is a framework that legitimizes the racial and subordinate experiences of marginalized groups (DeCuir & Dixson; Ladson-Billings; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). DeCuir and Dixson stated that counter-stories are a resource that both expose and critique the dominant (male, White, heterosexual) ideology, which perpetuates racial stereotypes. Counter-stories are personal, composite stories or narratives of People of Color (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). It is my understanding of the importance that others hear the stories of People of Color so that there is a new respect for what we have accomplished over the centuries since the United States was formed.

So why is there such a negative and frightened response from the Republican Party to the teaching of Critical Race theory? Why do they want to make sure that CRT is banned in schools? The article link that follows below provides an explanation as to why CRT has become such a flashpoint among conservative groups. Critical race theory is an academic framework centered on the idea that racism is systemic, and not just demonstrated by individual people with prejudices. Critical Race Theory holds that racial inequality is woven into legal systems and negatively affects People of Color in their schools, doctors' offices, the criminal justice system and countless other parts of life.

Remember that race is a "social construct and not biological." In other words, humans developed the subject of race for their own benefit. As such race is embedded in systems in order to benefit one race over another. Most people think of race in biological terms, and for more than 300 years, or ever since white Europeans began colonizing populations of color elsewhere in the world, race has indeed served as the "premier source of human identity" (Smedley, 1998, p. 690). "What is critical race theory and why do Republicans want to ban it in schools?" https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/05/29/critical-race-theory-bans-schools/.

It has been my experience that racism is definitely systemic as I have personally experienced it in our educational system, our governmental system and have seen the data from the criminal justice system (school to prison pipeline). For someone to deny that racism is not systemic means to me that they are failing to see the data for what it shows. If interested you may want to follow this link where there are various books and articles listed providing additional information on systemic racism https://mitpress.mit.edu/blog/articles-understanding-systemic-racism-and-social-justice.

There are a variety of lessons to be learned through the teaching of Race and Critical Race Theory. Unfortunately, many people fear even speaking the word "race." For years I have followed the career of Antiracist Tim Wise and close with a quote from him:
"We are, unlike people of color, born to belonging, and have rarely had to prove ourselves deserving of our presence here. At the very least, our right to be here hasn't really been questioned for a long time" (Wise, 2008, p.57). For many of us, we cannot and will not ignore the consequences of race (and ethno-racism) in America. As Critical Race theorists believe, each day brings proof that systemic racism exists and only by recognizing and working against it will we be able to lessen its effect in the lives of following generations.

Racism: The word nobody likes

Racism, the word nobody likes. Whites who don't want to confront racism and who don't name themselves "white" recoil in horror from it, shun it like the plague. To mention the word in their company disrupts their comfortable complacency . . . Racism is a slippery subject, one which evades confrontation, yet one which overshadows every aspect of our lives. (Anzaldua, 1990, p. xix).

At the same time and in reference to racism, Anzaldua maintained that racism is a word that "disrupts the comfortable complacency" of whites, because white people can afford to ignore racism because it does not happen to them. Perhaps the exhausting nature of race and racism came through to you while reading the quote from Gloria Anzaldua. Teaching, discussing, and living racism is exhausting. One can only imagine the effects of living racism on an everyday basis…because it is permanent. Critical Race Theorists seek to define tenet number two of its five

in the following manner:

> Acknowledgement that racism is a normal feature of society and is embedded within systems and institutions, like the legal and educational systems, that replicate racial inequality. This dismisses the idea that racist incidents are aberrations but instead are manifestations of structural and systemic racism.

Reading the previous definition of race, there can only be a recognition that Critical Race Theorists and tenet #2 are correct in the belief that "the permanence of racism" is manifest in the United States. I fail to understand why anyone would deny the existence of structural and systemic racism in the United States based on the definition provided above. As I wrote in my first essay on Critical Race Theory, CRT consists of five (5) tenets including: counter-storytelling; the permanence of racism; Whiteness as property; interest conversion; and the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; McCoy, 2006). This short essay on "the permanence of racism" seeks to provide a research-based response in order that we have an answer to those seeking to do away with CRT and especially, in this essay, the second tenet of "the permanence of racism."

Research on CRT provides a definition indicating that Critical Race Theory analyzes the role of race and racism in perpetuating social disparities between dominant and marginalized racial groups. (DeCuir & Dixson; Ladson-Billings; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As a person of color, I have seen and experienced the social disparities as pointed out by Critical Race Theorists. A response to White privilege in the educational system very often resulted in a denial that "privilege" exists. And yet, the number of teachers of color is dwarfed by the number of white, female teachers. Is this because people of color are not interested in teaching? I think not. It is mostly because the path to becoming a teacher is absolutely denied by an inequity in the education students of color receive beginning in kindergarten and continuing through the high school years. When does implicit bias begin in the educational system? There is little doubt that this bias begins as soon as students of color begin the schooling experience. This is an example of the "permanence of racism" of Critical Race Theory and is also an example of the fact that "race is socially constructed" and not biologically real. While recognizing the evolving and malleable nature of CRT, scholar Khiara Bridges outlines a few key tenets of CRT, including:

- Recognition that race is not biologically real but is socially constructed and socially significant. It recognizes that science (as demonstrated in the Human Genome Project) refutes the idea of biological racial differences. According to scholars Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, race is the product of social thought and is not connected to biological reality
- Rejection of popular understandings about racism, such as arguments that confine racism to a few "bad apples." CRT recognizes that racism is codified in law, embedded in structures, and woven into public policy. CRT rejects claims of meritocracy or "colorblindness." CRT recognizes that it is the systemic nature of racism that bears primary responsibility for reproducing racial inequality

The permanence of racism suggests that racism controls the political, social, and economic realms of U.S. society. In CRT, racism is seen as an inherent part of American civilization,

privileging White individuals over people of color in most areas of life, including education. (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). A few months ago, I had the good fortune to do a small research piece with a local university on race and anti-racism and received this particular quote from Dr. Pete Flores, CLEAR's Director of Equity regarding race as a system.

> It is not an individual character flaw, nor a personal moral failing, nor a psychiatric illness. It is a system (consisting of structures, policies, practices, and norms) that structures opportunity and assigns value based on phenotype, or the way people look. It unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities. Yet even more profoundly, the system of racism undermines realization of the full potential of our whole society because of the waste of human resources.
> Source: Center for the Study of Race, Social Justice & Health

I have noted over my years of teaching about race and racism that there are many individuals and groups who claim credit for the first real definition of race and racism. As such, I will leave it to others to help determine the actual time period that "racism" begin to take hold among humans. For my work, it is better to use current tools that help us see just how prejudiced we are in the present moment in order to impact our behavior towards others at the present time. One of the tools I most often used in my classes at Fresno State included "Project Implicit" https://www.projectimplicit.net/ which I believe everyone should participate in at one time or another. Should you choose to take one or more of the tests offered, please let me know what you thought of it.

Finally, as Social Justice educational leaders it is important to recognize the value of Critical Race Theory as a framework that is committed to a social justice agenda intent on eliminating all forms of subordination of people. We can begin to uncover our own forms of racism by first recognizing their existence in our life.

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