

**KEY CONCEPTS AND QUOTATIONS**

**Race essentialism:** Critical race theory reduces individuals to the quasi-metaphysical categories of “Blackness” and “Whiteness,” then loads those categories with value connotations—positive traits are attributed to “Blackness” and negative traits are attributed to “Whiteness.” Although some critical race theorists formally reject race essentialism, functionally, they often use these categories as malicious labels that erase individual identities.

- “Whiteness is dynamic, relational, and operating at all times and on myriad levels. These processes and practices include basic rights, values, beliefs, perspectives and experiences purported to be commonly shared by all but which are actually only consistently afforded to white people.” Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility.”
- “Whiteness is an invisible veil that cloaks its racist deleterious effects through individuals, organizations, and society. The result is that White people are allowed to enjoy the benefits that accrue to them by virtue of their skin color. Thus, Whiteness, White supremacy, and White privilege are three interlocking forces that disguise racism so it may allow White people to oppress and harm persons of color while maintaining their individual and collective advantage and innocence.” Derald Sue, “The Invisible Whiteness of Being.”
- “Whiteness by its very definition and operation as a key element of white supremacy kills; it is mental and physical terrorism. To end the white terrorism that is directed at racially oppressed people here and in other nations, it is essential that self-identified whites and their whiteness collaborators among the racially oppressed confront their white problem head-on, unencumbered by racial comfort.” Johnny Williams in the *Hartford Courant*.

**All whites are racist:** Critical race theorists argue explicitly that “all white people are racist” and perpetuate systems of white supremacy and systemic racism. This concept is deeply related to race essentialism—whites, including small children, cannot escape from being racist.

- “All white people are racist or complicit by virtue of benefiting from privileges that are not something they can voluntarily renounce.” Barbara Applebaum, *Being White, Being Good*.
- “White identity is inherently racist; white people do not exist outside the system of white supremacy.” Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*.
- “According to studies, babies at two to three years old, start internalizing racist ideas, start discerning and making decisions based on racist ideas ... We’re allowing our society to raise them to be racist.” Ibram Kendi on KING5 News.

**America is a fundamentally racist nation:** Critical race theorists argue that America was founded on racism, slavery, and white supremacy—and remains a fundamentally racist nation to this day.

- “White people raised in Western society are conditioned into a white supremacist worldview because it is the bedrock of our society and its institutions ... Entering the conversation with this understanding is freeing because it allows us to focus on how—rather than if—our racism is manifest.” Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*.
- “America is inherently a ‘white’ country: in character, in structure, in culture. Needless to say, black Americans create lives of their own. Yet, as a people, they face boundaries and

constrictions set by the white majority. America's version of *apartheid*, while lacking overt legal sanction, comes closest to the system even now being reformed in the land of its invention."  
Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations*.

- "It is a racial crime to be yourself if you are not White in America. It is a racial crime to look like yourself or empower yourself if you are not White." Ibram Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*.

**Collective guilt:** Critical race theory claims that individuals categorized as "White" are inherently responsible for injustice and oppression committed by white populations in the past. This concept is sometimes framed as "white guilt," "white shame," and "white complicity," which are psychological manifestations of collective guilt.

- "Many critical race theorists and social scientists alike hold that racism is pervasive, systemic, and deeply ingrained. If we take this perspective, then no white member of society seems quite so innocent." Delgado & Stefanic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*.
- "All whites are racist ... because we benefit from systemic white privilege. Generally whites think of racism as voluntary, intentional conduct done by horrible others. Whites spend a lot of time trying to convince ourselves and each other that we are not racist. A big step would be for whites to admit that we are racist and then to consider what to do about it." Wildman and Davis, *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*.

**Opposition to equality under the law:** Critical race theorists explicitly reject the principle of equality under the law, including the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. They argue that legal equality, nondiscrimination, and colorblindness are mere "camouflages" (Tate, 1997) used to uphold white supremacist structures.

- "Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law." Delgado & Stefanic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*.
- "[Critical race theorists] are also highly suspicious of another liberal mainstay, namely, rights ... Think how that system applauds affording everyone equality of opportunity but resists programs that assure equality of results." Delgado & Stefanic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*.

**Opposition to meritocracy:** Critical race theorists oppose meritocracy, especially standardized testing and competitive admissions in the education system. They claim that meritocracy is a mechanism to uphold racist structures and is derived from "racism, nativism, and eugenics" (Au, 2013).

- "White people are raised on five strong cultural myths: meritocracy, manifest destiny, white racelessness, monoculture, and white moral and managerial superiority. These lay the foundation for our feeling good about ourselves as white people, and they work in us to override and discredit counter-evidence." Peggy McIntosh, "White People Facing Race: Uncovering Myths that keep Racism in Place."
- "The ideologies of meritocracy, equal opportunity, individualism, and human nature we described above play a powerful role in denying the current of privilege and insisting that society is just." Ozlem & DiAngelo, *Is Everyone Really Equal?*.

**Active racial discrimination:** Critical race theorists believe that the state must actively discriminate against racial groups that are deemed “privileged,” meaning whites and sometimes Asians. Critical race theorists support policies such as racial quotas, race-based benefits, and race-based redistribution of wealth.

- “The only remedy to racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.” Ibram Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*.
- “Formal equality overlooks structural disadvantage and requires mere nondiscrimination or ‘equal treatment’; by contrast, affirmative action calls for *equalizing treatment* by redistributing power and resources in order to rectify inequities and to achieve real equality.” Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property.”

**Restriction of free speech:** Critical race theorists believe that the First Amendment serves to advance the interests of white supremacy and systemic racism, under the guise of freedom of speech. They argue that the government should restrict freedom of speech that is “racist” or “hateful.”

- “The American marketplace of ideas was founded with the idea of the racial inferiority of non-whites as one of its chief commodities, and ever since the market opened, racism has remained its most active item in trade.” Mari Matsuda, et. al., *Words That Wound*.
- “[Critical race theorist Mari] Matsuda suggested the creation of a legal doctrine to limit hate speech in cases where the message is one of racial inferiority, the message is directed against a historically oppressed group, and the message is persecutorial, hateful, and degrading.” *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*.
- “The DOA [or Department of Antiracism, as proposed by Kendi] would be empowered with disciplinary tools to wield over and against policymakers and public officials who do not voluntarily change their racist policy and ideas.” Ibram Kendi, “Inequality: Pass an Anti-Racist Constitutional Amendment.”

**Abolition of whiteness:** Critical race theorists believe that society should work to “abolish the white race.” Although they often insist that this means dismantling cultural constructions associated with white identity, this language often adopts tropes associated with race eliminationism.

- “We believe that so long as the white race exists, all movements against what is called ‘racism’ will fail. Therefore, our aim is to abolish the white race.” Noel Ignatiev in *Critical Whiteness Studies*.
- “Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity.” Noel Ignatiev in the film *Indoctrinate U*.
- “If you abolish slavery, you abolish slaveholders. If you want to abolish racial oppression, you do away with whiteness.” Noel Ignatiev in the film *Indoctrinate U*.

**Neo-segregation:** Critical race theorists endorse a new form of racial segregation—often called “racial affinity groups” or “racial caucuses”—with separate meetings, facilities, living quarters, and training programs for whites and racial minorities. The assumption is that whites must “do the work” to address their “internalized racial superiority” and racial minorities must be protected from invasive “whiteness.”

- “Multi-racial space often results in the people of color—who have been most harmed by structural racism—carrying an additional burden of educating others (at best) or being

retraumatized through the reliving of painful experiences.” JustLead Washington, *Caucuses as a Racial Justice Strategy*.

- “In a RAG [racial affinity group], white people can discover together their group identity. They can cultivate racial solidarity and compassion and support each other in sitting with the discomfort, confusion, and numbness that often accompany white racial awakening. They can also discern white privilege and its impact without the aid of or dependence on POC.” Ruth King, *Transforming Racism From The Inside Out*.

**Anti-capitalism and forced redistribution of property:** Critical race theorists have adopted the core Marxist position of anti-capitalism, arguing that America is an “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (hooks, 2012). They argue that “whiteness, initially constructed as a form of racial identity, evolved into a form of property” (Harris, 1993), allowing whites to extend domination from slavery into the free-market society. The solution is to redistribute private property and dismantle the system of capitalism.

- “In order to truly be anti-racist, you also have to truly be anti-capitalist.... And in order to truly be anti-capitalist, you have to be antiracist, because they’re interrelated.” Ibram Kendi, “Ibram X. Kendi on Why We Need to Fight Racism the Way We Fight Cancer.”
- “In challenging the property interest in whiteness, affirmative action [in support of property redistribution] could facilitate the destruction of the false premises of legitimacy and exclusivity inherent in whiteness and break the distorting link between white identity and property ... Existing distributions of property will be modified by rectifying unjust loss and inequality. Property rights will then be respected, but they will not be absolute and will be considered against a societal requirement of affirmative action.” Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property.”