

# RACIAL DIVIDE IN AMERICA: A GLIMPSE AT THE GLIMMER

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## ABSTRACT

*Recent events within the fabric of our society have caused clergy, educational practitioners, and researchers to question the relevance of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its impact on the modern-day church. There are valid positions on both sides of the argument. However, the article reflects on CRT's historical nature and implications as a by-product of why CRT does not apply to Christianity because of its original intent. The word of God stands alone. However, CRT provides a historical narrative that must be told as a means to bridge the divide while allowing faith to heal the souls of humanity.*

## Connected to a Common Root

Whether black or white, brown or yellow, on American soil, we lived together, fought together, and bled together against our common enemies. Yet, despite the rainbow of glory that shines across our racial divide, there's a dark history in the background of our shared reality. Over the years, the shadows of the racial divide have haunted us, resurrecting painful memories buried beneath our problematic past.

Fortunately, America has learned to persevere and survive by the hope of a different today. Still, the pangs of racism continue to trigger an increasing cry for equality and racial justice. From life's first cry, we were taught how to manage pain, but never how to manage the reality of life. One might ask, I never knew pain could lead me down a path of resistance and, in some ways, liberate me simultaneously. What an oxymoron, you might say.

Wherever the struggles lead, we must remember that there is no straight line in nature. And even though we do not live in a world where everything aligns in asymmetrical and sequential order, but one thing is for sure: It all aligns with God's divine order.

## Seeing our History through the Lens of Unbridled Truth

When you consider the evolution of racial controversies in America, you find a portrait not yet complete. It's because we fail to realize that every available record of history is an instrument in the laboratory of truth. Whatever we learned from the past are reflections of reality from the lens of another man. And like endangered species, truth is dying out, leaving fossils and clues to lead us to the liberating light of truth. Yet, at a careful glance into our shared history, we see the rays of truth shining brightly amid the dusk of suppressed shreds of evidence.

## Hope in the Valley of Despair

Frequently, we're led across the valley of dry bones of mistakes of our past, bearing the weight of the pain as you navigate a world that looks at you from the lens of your skin color. The notion of this abiding moth within the noble fabric of America continues to present challenges

and hardships that hinder the unity we seek. Tell me, how hard can it get to imagine a progressive society without the hindrances of exclusion but the honor of inclusion? What if we could begin to see one another-beyond our skin color-just as Christ sees all of us?

### **Caught in the Conundrum of Contradictions**

America's social media streams host the hot battle for prevailing voices of equal economic opportunities, social justice, and a call to resolve our political and educational divide. Yet, within our best attempt at dialogue, we find monstrous contradictions to be tamed by the limited scope of the collective us to bring out resolve and solutions. Yet we fight to be seen and not heard.

Despite moving this far from our gloomy past into the light, yet shadows of lingering, unanswered questions still cast uncertainties on our common future. So, this question, does race, equality, freedom, and critical race theory have a place in the fabric of America today? The answer is unequivocal YES!

### **Can you Perceive an Evolution of Hope?**

At the prolonged gaze into tomorrow's distant and timeless horizon, one might ask, is there any chance of hope. And if hope exists, how can we recognize it? Hence, in the veins of our present purple-pale reality, we pick the pulse of hope.

For instance, consider the aura of the era when men of color walked this land in chains until MLK dared to voice a dream that many never dared imagine. How many African Americans in history dreamt of seeing one of them seated on the highest office in the land? Yet it happened.

### **Hope is Found from the Precipice of Truth**

To understand the origins of racial inequality and critical race theory, we need to explore the historical narrative of our past to understand our present reality. I believe how we see our common history is the source of the pivotal questions of this day. For example, forgiveness and reconciliation do not erase justice and accountability. But, without righteous resuscitation of the dry bones of past oppression, we cannot truly stop the bleeding veins of inherited hurts.

It all comes down to the lens with which we view our inherited history, for the lens by which we view these accounts impacts behavior, response, attitude, and how we communicate with one another. In the face of a distorted view of the past, our attitudes and attributes ultimately normalize misrepresentation of truth and clinging to half-truths or alternative facts.

### **Is CRT the Final Answer?**

Although, Critical Race Theory (CRT) does have its place in presenting the truth of the historical and systematic nature of racism in this country. However, the notion of aligning critical race theory to the word of God is a false premise. Furthermore, an argument cannot be validated because CRT was developed as a theoretical framework for addressing the inequitable treatment of African Americans.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is one of the premiere theoretical constructs linking racism and educational inadequacies to the social and academic injustices against African-American and minority students. Matsuda (1991) defined critical race theory as the progressive work of legal

scholars of color who attempted to expand jurisprudence accounting for the role of racism in American law and education and to eradicate racism as an integral part of all forms of subordination. Critical race theory originated in the 1970s as discourse of legal scholarship depicting the injustices of traditional civil rights litigation to produce ongoing racial reform initiatives (Lyn & Adams, 2002; Parker et al., 1999; Parker & Lyn, 2002; Tate, 1997; Taylor, 1998).

The early writings in critical race theory began with Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, who took an interest in the slow progression of racial reform within the United States (Lyn & Adams, 2002). These individuals argued that traditional approaches to racial reform, such as protests, marches, filing briefs, and moral appeal to sensible citizens, received fewer gains than in previous times (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Through their efforts, other legal scholars began to share their frustrations with the early civil rights initiatives.

The parallel movement caused a paradigm shift throughout the Civil Rights Movement, which continued through storytelling (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lawrence, 1995). Stories provided the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and inferring. Ladson-Billings suggested that *“the historical and contextual nature of law and other science render the voices of dispossessed and marginalized group members mute”*. Storytelling gave voice, which provided power to the legal and educational inadequacies of racial injustice.

Critical Race Theory moved to the educational arena in the 1990s, addressing social and academic injustices of African-American students (Zeus, 2004). The academy began to see an increase of reported incidents of racism and differential treatment on college campuses. Educational scholars employed Critical Race Theory in the late 1990s to address issues of race and institutional barriers affecting African-American and other minority students at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). Educational practitioners and scholars addressed racism and other forms of subordination of marginalized groups with five modalities presented by critical race theory to build a framework of racial inequality in higher education. Critical Race Theory addressed five modalities in education, covering racism, research methods, and pedagogy. The five themes are as follows:

1. The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism: Critical Race Theory focuses on the central role of racism and school practices, and intersection of all forms of subordination including sexism and classism. In addition, critical race theory endorses such practices as objectivity, neutrality, meritocracy, curricular practices, tracking teacher expectations and intelligence testing. Critical Race Theorists take the position that racism has at least four dimensions: (a) macro and micro components, (b) institutional and individual forms, (c) conscious and unconscious elements, and (d) cumulative influence on both the individual and group.
2. The challenge to dominate ideology: Critical Race Theory inspects the academic and social hierarchy of educational inequality. Critical race educators confront dominant social and cultural assumptions regarding culture, intelligence, language, and capability through pedagogical research.
3. The commitment to social justice: Critical Race Theory continually builds constructs of social justice and offers liberatory or transformative responses to racial, gender, and class subjugation (Matsuda, 1999). The vision of social justice research eradicates all forms of racism, sexism, and poverty among minority groups.
4. The centrality of experiential knowledge: Critical Race Theory acknowledges the voices of experience are legitimate and appropriate for the understanding, analyzing, practicing, and teaching about racial subordination. Critical race educators use various methods to convey the experiences of African-Americans. These methods consist of storytelling, narratives, chronicles, family history, biographies, and parables to draw on the strength of lived experiences.
5. The interdisciplinary perspective: Critical Race Theory focuses on analyzing racism in both historical and modern contexts (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Yosso (2000) defined Critical Race Theory in education as a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that identified, analyzed, and transformed those structural, cultural, and interpersonal areas of education that maintain the marginal position and subordination of African-American students. Yosso's Critical Race Theory analyzed the challenges of racism in curriculum and discourse. Racial boundaries and discriminatory acts based on gender, class, language, or immigration status affect curriculum on both macro and micro levels. These discriminatory acts affect African-American performance at various institutions. The curriculum does not embrace minority students nor provide instructional practices that benefit these students.

With this perspective in mind, we lay this argument to rest and subscribe to a new argument of unity because we are all the same in the eyes of Christ. To suggest that a man-made socially constructed theory can address the sin of humanity further obligates us to commit to the inerrancy and effectiveness of the word of God. To suggest that America is systematically racist, and people are automatically oppressed or oppressors based on their race is a far reach, however, we can say with certainty that America is systemically sinful. For the bible teaches us in Romans 3:23 that "*all have sinned, and fell short of the Glory of the Lord*", this reality must be at the forefront when believers discuss social issues from a Christian lens.

### **We're Called to Lead Society to the Light of Truth for today and Hope for the Future**

Jesus did not subscribe to alternative facts or misrepresentation of the truth. *John 8:32* says, "*and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*". We, the church, must present truth no matter the societal impact or backlash. His truth is the only thing that matters in a world that feeds on the status quo or half-truths. The church is supposed to be the light that brings hope through sharing His love and the gospel.

When Christ died on the cross for humanity, skin color did not matter. It was His compassion and love for us. If we are committed to a color, then let it be red, the crimson color stain from the blood of a savior who looked past social, sinful, and human identities to give us his identity. The church has an obligation to stand up in times such as these, to speak truth in love, but be a model of intentional relationships and fellowship.

### **Finally**

Knowing fully well that we have branched out from a common root, it's time we come together to fix the tree and bear fruit together. Let's take off the inherited lens through which we assess and interpret our shared history. Our enemy is common, we are more alike than different, and particularly as believers we are called to walk together in agreement, so to allow a social theory to divide us is a mistake. This issue has divided families, denominations, and has severed relationships, this simply should not be, let us take back from the enemy our ability to love, respect, and walk together in Christian love. Then unbridle truth and righteousness will flow into a refreshing stream of genuine racial reconciliation.

### **CONCLUSION**

There are still glimmers of hope on our horizon. Wherever you are in the valley of despair, whether caught in the conundrum of contradictions or the quicksand of frustrations, you can see the evolution of hope-hope found from the precipice of truth.

Critical Race Theory is not the final answer; the love of God shed to the nation from the hands and hearts of the church will lead society to the light of truth for today and a glimmer of hope for the future.

God Bless America

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