

Sources: MLK, CRT, and The Gospel

Overview:

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MLK Facts and Myths

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Context:

“Many influential Evangelicals have claimed that social justice is a form of cultural Marxism. Therefore, as they have argued unpersuasively, social justice is incomparable with the Gospel and biblical notion of justice. They have called upon other Christian thinkers not to integrate social justice in their theological vocabulary and hermeneutical reasoning.” [One More Word about the Gospel, Cultural Marxism, and Social Justice](#) Celucien L. Joseph, Ph.D. (University of Texas at Dallas), Christian theologian, author, and Associate Professor of English at Indian River State College.

This article was published in 2019. Since then, an additional term has been popularized by the same opposition and included in their category of “cultural Marxist” social justice: Critical Race Theory. Over a few short years, CRT has become a hot topic in political media from laws erected to negate its study and practices in schools to, as formerly stated, points of contention in the American Christian church.

[Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping](#)

[Republican bill that limits how race, slavery and history are taught in Texas schools becomes law](#)

[Map: Where Critical Race Theory Is Under Attack - Education Week](#)

[Getting close to home, targeting school systems](#)

[Indiana bill to limit conversations on race, politics in schools receives mixed opposition](#)

[Clergy members condemn Rokita's remarks on Black Lives Matter, equity in schools](#)

[Misquoting MLK 1](#)

[Misquoting MLK 2](#)

[Misrepresenting MLK](#)

[John Piper Questions Martin Luther King's Theology at MLK50 Event](#)

Facts and Myths:

[MLK called a Communist](#)

[Why the FBI Saw Martin Luther King Jr. as a Communist Threat](#)

[I Have a Dream Speech](#)

[5 MLK Quotes Too Radical To White-Wash](#)

[Martin Luther King, Jr. on Income Inequality and Redistribution of Wealth](#)

[Actual context for MLK's writing on "the Divine Sonship of Jesus, the Virgin Birth, and the Bodily Resurrection"](#)

Political and Church Controversy:

[The first complaint filed under Tennessee's anti-critical race theory law was over a book teaching about Martin Luther King Jr.](#)

[The Incompatibility of Critical Theory and Christianity](#)

[Critical Race Theory and Christianity](#)

This is an incomplete argument. Racism is not (only) hate of skin color. Look at the definition of racism: race + ism.

Bryan Stevenson, civil rights attorney and author of *New York Times* best-selling book *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, defines racism: “the narrative of racial difference.” Basically, “race” should not be a concept for us humans outside of the truth that we are one race—the human race. To believe that there is a racial difference is to be, in and of itself, racist and tote “that ideology of white supremacy...this idea of racial hierarchy.” [Transcript: Race in America: Fighting for Justice with Bryan Stevenson](#)

The Bible doesn't really define "racism," at least not in the CRTs' definition or even today's dictionary. In the Bible, there were no recorded races nor a racial class system. "Race" (racial difference) is a concept and a construct only a few centuries old: [Scientific classifications of race](#). [More info on Blumenbach and construct of race](#)

Defining CRT:

Delgado (1995, p. xiii), "Critical Race Theory sprang up in the mid- 1970s with the early work of Derrick Bell (an African American) and Alan Freeman (a white), both of whom were deeply distressed over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States. They argued that the traditional approaches of *amicus* briefs, conducting protests and marches, and appealing to the moral sensibilities of decent citizens produced smaller and fewer gains than in previous times. Before long they were being joined by other legal scholars who shared their frustration with traditional civil rights strategies."

"In short, Critical Race Theory is an intellectual movement that is both particular to our postmodern (and conservative) times and part of a long tradition of human resistance and liberation. On the one hand, the movement highlights a creative—and tension-ridden—fusion of theoretical self-reflection, formal innovation, radical politics, existential evaluation, reconstructive experimentation, and vocational anguish."

—Cornel West, forward from *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed The Movement*

[Gloria Ladson-Billings, Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education?](#) "an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power."

"CRT insists on a critique of liberalism."

Crenshaw (1988), "Critical [legal] scholars have attempted to analyze legal ideology and discourse as a social artifact which operates to recreate and legitimate American society" (p. 1350). Scholars in the CLS movement decipher legal doctrine to expose both its internal and external inconsistencies and reveal the ways that "legal ideology has helped create, support, and legitimate America's present class structure" (Crenshaw, p. 1350).

Ladson-Billings "CLS fails to provide pragmatic strategies for material social transformation...CLS scholars critique mainstream legal ideology for its portrayal of U.S. society as a meritocracy but failed to include racism in its critique. Thus, CRT became a logical outgrowth of the discontent of legal scholars of color."

“analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down” (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv)

Essential Questions:

Why is Sunday morning still “the most segregated hour of Christian America?”

Did the Civil Rights Movement accomplish its goals?

What were those goals?

Were ALL of them accomplished?

How do you know?

How effective were the results?

Goal [“to gain equal rights under the law in the United States”](#)

“Crenshaw (1988) argues that the liberal perspective of the ‘civil rights crusade as a long, slow, but always upward pull’ (p. 1334) is flawed because it fails to understand the limits of current legal paradigms to serve as catalysts for social change and its emphasis on incrementalism. CRT argues that racism requires sweeping changes, but liberalism has no mechanism for such change. Rather, liberal legal practices support the painstakingly slow process of arguing legal precedence to gain citizen rights for people of color.” Ladson-Billings

“related to the liberal perspective, is the argument posed by CRT that Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation. For example, although under attack throughout the nation, the policy of affirmative action has benefited Whites, a contention that is validated by the fact that the actual numbers reveal that the major recipients of affirmative action hiring policies have been White women (Guy-Sheftall, 1993). One might argue, then, that many of these White women have incomes that support households in which other Whites live - men, women, and children. Thus, these women’s ability to find work ultimately benefits Whites, in general.” Ladson-Billings

[On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart](#)

“How do you explain racial disparity?” Gloria Ladson-Billings

MLK’s Gospel:

[Social Gospel](#)

[MLK on Socialism, Marxism, Communism, and the Gospel](#)

Definition of [socialism](#): a political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole

Ladson-Billings: “an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power”

Cornel West: “theoretical self-reflection, formal innovation, radical politics, existential evaluation, reconstructive experimentation, and vocational anguish”

Question– Are MLK and CRTs saying the same thing?

[Derrick Bell on MLK, racism, and religion](#)

[Derrick Bell on the importance of faith](#)

[Derrick Bell on Jesus](#)

Implications and Applications:

Question– Is what MLK and Derrick Bell saying incompatible with the Gospel? How?

[Galatians 6:2-10](#)

[Critical race theory ‘buzzwords’](#)

[Responding to Social Justice Rhetoric: A Cheat Sheet for Policy Makers](#)

[“A Call for Unity”](#)

[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)

[SBC "On Critical Race Theory And Intersectionality"](#)

“It may be true that morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. It may be true that the law cannot change the heart but it can restrain the heartless. It may be true that the law can't make a man love me, but it can restrain him from lynching me, and I think that's pretty important also.” <https://www.benjerry.com/whats-new/2021/01/relevant-mlk-quotes>