The Reality of the Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory, or CRT, is a current topic of ongoing debate in America. The precise definition of this theory is disagreed on by proponents and opponents (Sawchuk). Stephen Sawchuk writes in *Education Week* that “The core idea is that racism is a social construct, and that it is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies.” Many critics, particularly conservative Republicans, argue that this theory urges intolerance and divides Americans into either the “oppressor” or the “oppressed”, arguing that whites are inherently racist (Sawchuk). They assume the CRT stereotypes automatic racism in whites rather than the historical and present patterns of racism seen throughout society. Patricia Williams eloquently asserts in *Nation* that “It is a sign of the confusion of this moment that condemning racist language or bullying behavior is seen as the automatic and specific equivalent of being ‘anti-white,’” (16). Some even go on futher to claim that the theory advocates discriminating against whites to obtain equality (Sawchuk). However, these arguments are false.

Rather than claiming that whites are inherently racist, critical race theory shines a light on the fact that throughout history, whites have been provided with opportunities that minority groups have been hindered from altogether, leading to social structures that add to injustice and inequality (“American History” 10). Therefore, if legislation passes to prohibit the teaching of CRT in classrooms across America, the very issues that critical race theory stands for will not be addressed. Schools need to focus more specific teachings on the historical differences in opportunity between a white generational line and an African American one in order to bring objective awareness to societal discrimination; the state government should provide a consistent, objective curriuculum for this to be taught in schools so that there is a clear understanding of CRT across America.

Many elected officials disparage critical race theory, arguing that racial injustices such as slavery, systemic racism, and segration should not be taught in schools in order to keep children from harm (“American History” 10). In some states, this has led to legislation being passed preventing CRT from school curriculums altogether (10). This is incredibly cowardly. By not teaching critical race theory, students are not “kept from harm”; instead, they are actually being sheltered from the hard realities of our history that continue to affect society (10). By not teaching CRT, students are not properly equipped to face the harsh truths of the world (“American History” 10). By not teaching critical race theory, the very issues that the theory stands for will not only continue, but potentially worsen. By not teaching CRT, we as a society are turning a blind eye to pressing issues that should be addressed in order for our society to grow in equity of opportunity. As stated in *Scientific American*, “Removing conversations around race and society removes truth and reality from education,” (10). For these reasons, legislation prohibiting critical race theory in school curriculums is not right in a society that is built upon equality and liberty for all. Why choose to go around a problem when one can go through it? The best way to go through this problem is to objectively teach CRT in schools by focusing on historical differences in opportunities among whites versus African Americans.

Schools need to teach more about African American opportunity suppressors involving land ownership, voting rights, banking/loans, and red-lining compared to the opportunities of whites. For example, in some states African American men were not even allowed to own land after the Civil War ended, whereas white men could always own land (Devlin). Between 1910 and 1997, about 14% of all farmers were black, and even then many of them were lynched by white men who wanted their land (Devlin). Owning land is typically passed down to future generations which generates an income, but when so few African Americans were able to possess any, they were put at a great disadvantage that current generations are still facing today (Devlin). African American farmers were six times more likely to be foreclosed on than white farmers from 2006 to 2016, and those who were able to hold onto their land today make less than $40,000 annually compared to greater than $190,000 by white farmers (Devlin). This is just one example of the many opportunity prohibitors African Americans had to face while whites were not suppressed but rather propelled forward into success that would accumulate for future generations. My dad provided me with a great analogy for this by stating: “It is as if a black person and white person had to run a marathon. The black person had to start at the zero mile mark and run the entire 26.2 miles, whereas the white person was able to start at the halfway mark and only run 13.1 miles.” Today, whites have more opportunity through meritocracy whereas African Americans do not. By teaching such topics as these in schools, the statistics would provide students with an objective understanding of the clear lack of opportunities African Americans faced, which would educate them on the reason for the CRT.

Rather than prohibiting the teaching of critical race theory and other racial topics from being taught in the classroom, the state government should come up with an objective curriculum that highlights the historical differences between opportunities among whites versus African Americans. This would explain the background for the CRT in a purely statistical manner rather than leaving room for critics to redefine the theory in ways that transform it into a racist, negative problem. The state government's goal should be to create a curriculum that promotes understanding and empathy rather than accusation and guilt. Children should be taught about even the uncomfortable societal topics, such as critical race theory, so that they are equipped for the real world and can be educated so that our society is able to move forward together.

Works Cited

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