

Anti-CRT Playbook by Citizens for Renewing America
Reviewed by Stella of Progressive Devilry

****Disclaimer****

This has not been formally edited so please excuse the typos, grammatical errors etc: this was intended as a flow of consciousness to organize my thoughts regarding the playbook.

There are many interpretations running around as to what Critical Race Theory is, which has garnered continuous attention from right-wing U.S. politics and those hoping to use fear tactics to win local school board races.

There is a political playbook for Zealotted School Board Candidates created by Citizens for Renewing America titled: *Combatting Critical Race Theory In Your Community: An A to Z Guide on how to stop critical race theory and reclaim your local school board.*

Before I start this analysis, I need to remind everyone that Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Critical Social Justice are not being taught in K-12. It's a high level college *theory* or lens used to examine law in law schools, as well as college courses focused on history and social justice. The sources they use to attempt to prove their point are taken well out of context, and in fact, are citing out of date versions of the books currently available with updated information. For example:

The playbook starts out, unironically, with a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. as if having his words on the first page somehow lends more credibility to what they say over the next 18 pages. It also blatantly implies that CRT is racist, and that this playbook is actually to help combat that racism.

The first sentence basically tells it's readers that the following is super easy to understand and there's no reason to apply any critical thinking. And if you aren't against CRT, then you don't care about your children.

They also front load the fact that their sources are heavily biased, but let you know the reason they provide them is so that you can use them to stop CRT in schools.

THEN, they let you know that if 18 pages is too much, you can read this 8 page distilled version with all the buzzwords and important things you need to know.

This is all on the first page of their so-called playbook.

The first section is titled "Knowing and Identifying CRT", to which they begin with a wildly and widely unaccepted interpretation of what **they** think CRT is. In the first page of the section they don't use any sources, yet draw conclusions as if they are forgone, except everything they say is without merit. A simple google search completely obliterates their baseless personal

definition. Their sources come in later, where they cherry pick sentences without context in order to support their speculative definition of CRT.

Right from the beginning, they pretend to be explaining something to people they've already told they don't need to think about that hard. The first sentence beginning this section already has an error in it: "In order to understand what Critical Race Theory is, we first need to understand where it comes from. Critical Social Justice says that all of society should be looked at and understood through the lens of identity politics."

That is just patently false. This document is doing some pretty interesting mental gymnastics in order to prove their false narrative. And that's exactly why they don't have a source for this sentence, because it's just not true. After a quick online search, by taking that sentence and sticking it into Google: New Discourses pops up with a blog post by James Lindsay, who they list in their sources later. The name of the blog post? Naming the Enemy: CSJ...

A quick clarification on what CSJ is and this specific mix of words, not to be confused with plain old Social Justice.

First, the *Critical Social Justice*(CSJ) is a relatively new term in the United States. The earliest use I can find in a scholarly article is from 2008 and there are only a couple article with that specific placement of words. Plain social justice I think was a bit too wide of a term for them to attach to this document, so they took a not from James Lindsay and added "Critical" in front of it.

The term *Critical Race Theory* (CRT) is much older originating in the seventies with over a thousand scholarly articles starting in 1970.

Now a quick bit of history about the phrase "Critical Theory". It's a phrase that was created in the early part of the 20th century by a bunch of old white dudes to give their philosophical debates a classification. And I think I found out why people think CRT is "Marxist" as I've been hearing from the right-wing zealots.

The reason they think it's marxist but won't say it, because they would have to cite this source:

According to a 2018 book titled "*White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*" by Robin Diangelo, purports to trace the origins of the phrase "Critical Theory" to the Frankfurt School of Social Theory, which was a philosophical college where they debated all philosophies which included Marx, Kant, Freud, Hegel, Weber, Simmel, and Lukacs. The best part of this, is the fact that this school of thought was actually critical of Marxism-Leninism which is the term for the base of Communism. The reason they gathered together and debate philosophy was so they could find a better way to move their society forward.

Moving back to the present: CRT and CSJ are lenses, regardless of how anyone wants to interpret them. The use of the words "identity politics" here, followed by a strangled definition of what they think it is, seems telling. They say that CSJ "divides" society based on "race, ethnicity,

SEXUAL PREFERENCE, religion, **disability status**, and gender, and then requires a view” (*a lens perhaps*) “of society based on which groups” society is divided into.

I don't even know where to start with that definition. It's just... wrong. Completely false. And again, they don't cite a source here so it's something they completely made up on their own.

They continue to make baseless interpretations in order to give their document more weight going forward, but again: by barely scratching the surface you can see none of what they say is true. Which means that every argument built on this flimsy foundation is also wrong. Their constant use of the phrase: “straight white men” and “white people” shows exactly who they want to be reading this document and soaking up their fake oppression.

The first source they use is from the book: *How to be an Antiracist*: by Ibram Kendi. They use this after introducing antiracism as a way to sanction racism, in their opinion.

The quote they use: **“If racial discrimination is defined as treating, considering, or making a distinction in favor or against an individual based on that person’s race, then racial discrimination is not inherently racist. The defining question is whether the discrimination is creating equity or inequity. If discrimination is creating equity, then it is antiracist.”**

Their interpretation of this quote is exciting, because they claim that discrimination against people of color happened “in the past” as if it is not currently ongoing. And that the use of the word antiracism is to actually deflect the racism back toward white people for historical wrongs, so that “African Americans” can “catch up”. They also accuse antiracism as wanting to “stifle the opportunities of some children because of the traits they were born with”. Then they say that CRT has its version of antiracism which expects you to become an activist.

There is no separate version of anti-racism. It is exactly as it seems. Call out racism as you see it. That means having those uncomfortable conversations with your friends and family that “off-color” the joke they think is funny, is damaging to the People of Color. It means stopping to film police when they are harassing someone. It means acknowledging that not everyone can run through their own neighborhood in a hoodie, without someone calling the police, or getting the fear that they might lose their life. Or realizing that when you get pulled over, you're irritated, not actively fearing for your life.

When you get pulled over, what do you do? I know I immediately reach for my glove box so I can have my registration ready. Being anti-racist is also acknowledging that not everyone can do that. Some people pull over, turn off their car, roll down their windows and keep their hands up palms to the windshield resting on the steering wheel or out the window while they to make sure every movement is visible and slow.

Now let's get back to the quote they shared from Ibram Kendi's book look for that missing context they left out. The book is 320 pages long, and yet they share one quote from page 19. I

looked up the book on Amazon and noticed that the preview feature allows you to read the first 23 pages. The first chapter which numbers pages 14-23. So it was literally the least amount of reading they could do for this book.

The chapter is called: Definitions. And true to its name, on page 14, the first page of the chapter it gives a definition that they very conveniently left out.

Racist: One who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or inaction or repressing a racist idea.

Antiracist: One who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea.

Now let's go find that quote, which happens 5 pages later on page 19, in the middle of the chapter, two sentences into a paragraph and leaves off the end. The whole paragraph reads as such:

“Since the 1960s, racist power has commandeered the term “racial discrimination,” transforming the act of discriminating on the basis of race into an inherently racist act. But **if racial discrimination is defined as treating, considering, or making a distinction in favor or against an individual based on that person's race, then racial discrimination is not inherently racist. The defining question is whether the discrimination is creating equity or inequity. If discrimination is creating equity, then it is antiracist.** If discrimination is creating inequity, then it is racist. Someone reproducing inequity through permanently assisting an overrepresented racial group into wealth and power is entirely different than someone challenging that inequity by temporarily assisting an underrepresented racial group into relative wealth and power until equity is reached.”

By adding this context, it is obvious that the author is talking about removing obstacles for underrepresented people of color, not adding extra obstacles for the racial majority.

This quote was very obviously taken out of context in order to fit their narrative, which is still yet to be substantiated by literally any of their own sources.

The second source on the third page is *Critical Race Theory: An introduction* by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic so I looked it up. It seemed odd that they couldn't find a definition in a college level introduction book in order to form the beginning of their argument, so I checked out the preview on Amazon which usually lets you view the first few pages in a book. And sure enough, page 3 of the introduction says,

“A. What is Critical Race Theory? The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up, but places them in a broader perspective that

includes, economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. **Unlike traditional civil rights, which stresses incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundation of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.**”

Now as I was reading this third page, I noticed their quote came from a much older version of the book. The first edition from 2001 is now out of print as the two most recent versions came out in 2012 and 2017 respectively. I wondered why they used the 2001 quote, and their hyperlink in the PDF led only to the Amazon link. But I found the text on squarespace that has 47 of the 188 pages free to use, which may be why they only use quotes from this text purportedly on page 3 and page 23.

For page three they use the third sentence of the quote I just shared, rather than the first two sentences, taking that quote wholly out of context and giving a very biased view of what the authors had prefaced that sentence with.

“Unlike traditional civil rights, which stresses incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundation of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law”

Using just this section without the sentences before it, makes it sound like the authors are throwing out civil right, when all they are doing is providing additional context i.e. THE LENS OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY.

The third quote they use, right after this one, comes 20 pages later under Chapter 11: *Hallmark Critical Race Theory Themes*. Subsection C. *Critique of Liberalism*.

So the quote they are sharing, just by adding the context of the headers for this section, is actually a critique of this section. But it gets better, the quote they share is, **“Crits [Critical Race Theorists] are highly suspicious of another liberal mainstay, namely, rights.”**

Again, they pull from the middle of this section without the context. Before you get to this sentence, the authors expound on the use of “color blindness” in the courts.

The actual quote from this section: **“Crits are also highly suspicious of another liberal mainstay, namely, rights.** Particularly some of the older, more radical CRT scholars with roots in racial realism and an economic view of history believe that moral and legal rights are apt to do the right holder much less good than many would like to think. Rights are almost always procedural (for example, for a fair process) rather than substantive (for example, for food, housing, or education). Think how our system applauds affording everyone equality of opportunity, but resists programs that assure equality of results. Moreover, rights are almost always cut back when they conflict with the interests of the powerful. For example, hate speech,

which targets mainly minorities, gays, lesbians, and other outsiders, is almost always tolerated, while speech that offends the interests of empowered groups finds a ready exception in First Amendment law.”

The author goes on to talk about how often small rights are given, with no power to actually use them like *Brown v. Board of Education*. Yeah they desegregated the schools, but very little was done to stop the rampantly dangerous hate crimes to protect the children being integrated and just trying to get a better education, so some black children were actually worse off than they were before. Mainly because many political institutions would delay any further change or protections by forcing people to go to court, re-interpreting the law to fit their own agenda, and just outright refusing to follow the supreme court decisions.

Just because you have a right, does not mean you have access to that right. A perfect example, is voting rights for BIPOC. The voting rights act was passed in 1965, and while there was a law passed in 1948 that prohibited voter intimidation, it still happened.

These are the “rights” that the quote is referring to. It’s ironic that the quote used in this playbook attempting to imply that CRT wants to somehow get rid of or at the very least is suspicious of your rights, is directly pointing out that, that isn’t the case at all. In fact, it’s showing how one persons rights are not the same as another’s by historical precedent.

The play book then gives their own version of what they think Leftists will ask, which are easily answered by their own nonsense. It’s pretty funny to see these questions as they pretend to be leftists to poke holes in their own work, which is very easily done.

“CRT is not a diversity and inclusion “training” but a practice of interrogating the role of race and racism in society that emerged in the legal academy and spread to other fields of scholarship. Crenshaw—who coined the term “CRT”—**notes that CRT is not a noun, but a verb. It cannot be confined to a static and narrow definition but is considered to be an evolving and malleable practice.** It critiques how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuate a racial caste system that relegates people of color to the bottom tiers. CRT also recognizes that race intersects with other identities, including sexuality, gender identity, and others. CRT recognizes that racism is not a bygone relic of the past. Instead, it acknowledges that the legacy of slavery, segregation, and the imposition of second-class citizenship on Black Americans and other people of color continue to permeate the social fabric of this nation.”

In describing what they think is CRT, they leave no room for anti-racism or in fact any anti-prejudice action or philosophy.

So the question is: what can we do to be an equality/equity/justice proponent without being accused of harboring secret CRT inclinations.

The only word missing from their laundry list of CRT “buzzwords” is equality.

Is equality really the only word they are allowed to be non-CRT? Is that why people like Matt Van Bogart only use the word equality and refuse to support equity?

Based on everything said in this booklet, they have failed to prove that CRT is a racist framework as they say. At best they show that a few people have some radical beliefs that also believe and activate around CRT. But if we are going to call an entire movement racist, based on a few people's beliefs within that movement: then we would be forced to consider all Republican and right-wing politics racist based on those that align there fundamentally, politically, and ideologically.

That is the argument being made here: condemn a contextual lens based on everyone who uses it. Is that how we are moving forward now?

That's the thing with these far-right zealots, they always want to paint everyone in a single group with the same brush.

Anti-CRT Zealots are using the ambiguity of their definition of CRT to block schools from teaching the true history of racism and slavery in our schools.

They refuse to define what CRT is not. They use this ambiguity to create a new bogeyman in the form of any and all human rights activists as well as all words used to describe the activism, except "equality".

They do not define what a school without "CRT" would look like. What is the goal? What are the benchmarks? How will a candidate who has bought into this propaganda know they have won?

CRT is the illusive monster than no one can see or describe, which makes it the perfect idol for right-wing conservative witch hunting.

Steps to set up a coalition:

Nominate board members, create social media groups, or take over larger ones with similar issues in mind, create a coalition website that states all issues and lists candidates.

Sound familiar? Our local one is called Common Sense for Wenatchee.

Sources:

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Critical Race Theory: An introduction(Second edition) 2012

<https://www.amazon.com/Critical-Race-Theory-Introduction-America/dp/0814721354?asin=0814721354&revisionId=&format=4&depth=1>

Critical Race Theory: An introduction (First Edition) 2001

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Origins of CRT in Education:

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203155721-16/origins-connections-social-justice-critical-race-theory-education-thandeka-chapman>

New Discourses:

Naming the enemy: CSJ

<https://newdiscourses.com/2020/02/naming-enemy-critical-social-justice/>

<https://newdiscourses.com/2021/06/why-you-can-be-transgender-but-not-transracial/>

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<https://newdiscourses.com/2021/08/how-to-make-a-critical-theory-out-of-anything/>

<https://newdiscourses.com/resisting-critical-race-theory-workshop/>

White Fragility:

<https://www.robindiangelo.com/publications/>

Identity Politics:

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How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram Kendi:

https://www.amazon.com/How-Be-Antiracist-Ibram-Kendi/dp/0525509283/ref=sr_1_2?crd=3DIX2PECAO9D8&dchild=1&keywords=ibram+x.+kendi&qid=1628801259&srefix=ibram+%2Caps%2C232&sr=8-2&asin=0525509283&revisionId=&format=4&depth=1

Frankfurt School:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankfurt_School

Questions to ask your School Board from "Parents defending Ed"

<https://defendinged.org/resources/questions-to-ask-school-officials/>

<https://youtu.be/2FHiKN6CeCU>

Sources listed on page 21 as "researching CRT":

<https://parentsknowbest.com/> - trains people to take over school board

<https://www.manhattan-institute.org/standing-against-critical-race-theory> - right-wing think tank

<https://www.texaspolicy.com/multimedia/article/waking-up-to-woke-combatting-critical-race-theory> - This is the website that linked the buzzwords they later took down

<https://www.heritage.org/civil-rights/report/critical-race-theory-the-new-intolerance-and-its-grip-america> - Old Right-Wing think tank run by far-right republicans

<https://defendinged.org/engage/> - parents defending education again with tips on how to write press releases etc.

Nazi Propaganda:

<https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/nazi-propaganda-1>

School Board Candidate sources:

Julie:

https://www.wenatcheeworld.com/education/julie-norton-candidate-for-reelection-to-wenatchee-school-board-position-no-5/article_44f109e0-e43b-11eb-bf2a-27a7681feada.html

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<https://m.facebook.com/pages/category/Public---Government-Service/Julie-Norton-for-Wenatchee-School-District-School-Board-Position-5-103070835198032/>

Matt:

https://www.wenatcheeworld.com/education/matt-van-bogart-candidate-for-wenatchee-school-board-position-no-2/article_0d4182e6-e43a-11eb-a0c9-ab624cebffbb.html

<https://www.facebook.com/vanbogart4wsd/>

Katherine:

<https://www.thomasforschoolboard4.com/q-a>