

# **Against Illiberalism**

**A critique of illiberal trends in liberal institutions, with a focus on  
neoracist ideology in Unitarian Universalism**

**by**

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"I want to defend society and its inhabitants from all ideologies, science included. All ideologies must be seen in perspective. One must not take them too seriously. One must read them like fairy-tales which have lots of interesting things to say but which also contain wicked lies, or like ethical prescriptions which may be useful rules of thumb but which are deadly when followed to the letter."-- Philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend

"I just fundamentally believe that we should be fighting for a world in which there are no caste systems, in which people are judged based on their individual merit and character, in which we move from the historical construct of race, rather than reifying it. I just don't think you look at history and believe making people fixated on their immutable characteristics and saying those immutable characteristics have immutable power leads to anywhere good."-- Bari Weiss, author of *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*

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## 1 Introduction

This text examines recent illiberal trends in traditionally liberal institutions. Specifically, it critiques radical “anti-racism” approaches based on critical race theory (CRT) and the ideas of academics such as Ibram X. Kendi and Robin DiAngelo. It also focuses on Unitarian Universalism, a historically liberal church whose national leadership has adopted an extreme version of critical race theory.

Racial and other inequities are problems in all societies and all of human history, and there are no simple, easy or objectively correct solutions. While critical race theory (CRT) offers important insights on racism and racial disparities, I believe in liberalism\*, freedom of speech and the free exchange of ideas, things that extreme CRT adherents, Kendi and DiAngelo oppose.

Freedom of speech and expression and the free exchange of ideas support diversity, multiculturalism and marginalized groups. Illiberalism, dogmatism and authoritarianism are oppressive of all groups, minority and majority, and should be rejected wherever they appear.

**\* Definition of liberalism in this text:** The definition of liberalism in this text and generally throughout the world is different from the common American definition. Americans commonly associate liberalism and liberal with the political left and Democratic Party.

Often referred to as *classical liberalism*, liberalism in this text and generally in the world refers to a political and moral philosophy that supports, amongst other things, individual and human rights, equality, democracy, freedom of religion and secularism, economic and political freedom, and freedom of speech and the press. This form of liberalism includes people from the political left, political center and political conservatives.

**Liberal religion or religious liberalism** is liberalism in the context of religion and church. It contrasts with fundamentalist, dogmatic and orthodox religions such as Catholicism and Calvinism.

**Illiberalism** means opposition to or lack of liberalism. Illiberalism includes opposition to or lack of freedom of thought and behavior, and lack of civil liberties. It is associated with fundamentalism, dogmatism, and intolerance. Illiberalism can be found in both the political right and the political left.

## 2 What Is Unitarian Universalism?

Unitarian Universalism (UU) is a liberal church formed in 1961 by the combining of centuries-old Unitarianism and Universalism. Unitarianism in particular has a longtime heretical tradition dating back to Michael Servetus who was burned at the stake by John Calvin for renouncing the ideas of the Trinity and original sin. UU does not have a creed but a basic set of ethical principles including freedom of conscience and the use of democratic processes, the belief in the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, and the free and responsible search for truth. (Furrer 2019) (UU Humanist Association 2018)

UU minister Rev. Rick Davis wrote, “In founding our two traditions our Universalist and Unitarian forbears sought to create a religious refuge from the oppressive attitudes and practices engendered by ideological, dogmatic thinking.”

University of Chicago evolutionary biologist and organized religion critic Jerry Coyne wrote, “Of all existing religions that claim to be religions, Unitarian Universalism (UU) seems to be the least dogmatic and therefore the least harmful—and perhaps the most liberal and tolerant.”

While Unitarians and Universalists were historically Christian, modern UU is pluralistic. Its theological sources come from different religious and secular traditions. Its members include Christians, Jews, Muslims, agnostics, atheists, Buddhists and pagans. A UU slogan is “We don’t have to think alike to love alike.”

Unlike top-down religions such as Catholicism, UU congregations are independent and self-determining, picking their ministers. Traditionally, the national organization, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), works as a service organization to support congregations. (WSUU 2021) (Wikipedia 2017)

Social justice has long been a central part of UU. UU has been active in the civil rights movement, women’s and LGBT rights, anti-nuclear, anti-war and environmental causes. It was the first major church to perform homosexual unions, the first traditionally white American church to have a black lead the national organization, the current UUA President is a woman, and more ministers are women than men. (UUA 2016) (UUA 2017) (UU World 2011)

UU is small and eccentric. Its pluralism including the inclusion of atheists and agnostics, lack of central theology and its increasingly far left politics make it the perfect church for a small

minority of people, but too fringe and politically narrow for most Americans. (Loehr 2005) (Halsted 2018) (UUA 2018)

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### **3 Lack of Racial, Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in UU**

As with most churches, Unitarian Universalism has had a particular demographic and culture. UU is associated with its upper middle class, educated, white, New England Unitarian roots. Famous Unitarians included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Susan B. Anthony, Thomas Jefferson, Frank Lloyd Wright and Julian Jaynes. The Collegeville Pennsylvania fellowship is named after Thomas Paine

UU has advanced from its heterosocial patriarchal roots but remains predominantly white. This lack of racial diversity has been a concern for many UUs.

Martin Luther King Jr. said that Sunday at 11 am is the most segregated time in America, with people traditionally tending to congregate with their own demographic. Some racial minorities have said they are drawn to UU's beliefs but have a hard time fitting in with the dominant culture. One congregant wrote "I don't think segregation is intentional. It's a matter of music, demographics, age, culture, worship style, etc." I am Jewish and neurodivergent (autistic and bipolar) and have experienced how people of different cultures, views and ways of thinking can be frustrated in a culturally monolithic UU congregation. (Blake 2010) (Grossman 2015) (8th Principle)

There have been attempts to become more racially diverse, including diversifying service styles, structures and music, and having racial justice education. A UU congregation I attended planned to have services in different traditions: Jewish, pagan, Southern Baptist, Buddhist, secular humanist.

Some UUs are not particularly troubled by the lack of diversity. They say that most churches and congregations have particular cultures and demographics, such as Scandinavian Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox congregations, many Muslim and Hindu temples and Jewish synagogues. I attend a predominantly Ashkenazi synagogue. Further, a congregation mostly attracts people from its neighborhood which means the congregation will tend to reflect the demographics of the neighborhood.

As far as diversity goes, there is more than one way to skin a cat. For example, congregations can do interfaith work with other congregations and organizations. A Seattle UU congregation belongs to an interfaith network with members from the neighborhood mosque, Hispanic Catholic congregation and synagogue working together in neighborhood charity work. This type of work not only involves a diversity of races, but cultures and beliefs.

Others say UU's increasingly narrow left politics and eccentric theology make it out of step with most racial and ethnic minorities, likely preventing it from ever attracting large swaths. After all, UU's politics and theology make it out of step with most whites. (Braestrup 2017)

There is no one or objectively correct answer as to what should be achieved or how to achieve it.

The issue of racial diversity and how to attract and maintain minorities in dominantly white churches is an issue in other religions. With challenges, successes and failures, there have been numerous attempts to create multi-racial Christian churches.

**\*Further reading: "The Multiethnic Church Movement Hasn't Lived up to Its Promise" (National Public Radio)**

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## 4 Recent Radical Attempts at Change In UU, and the Institutional Introduction Of Critical Race Theory

In recent years, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has been taken over by self-described radicals who, in the name of inclusion and diversity, wish to make extreme, fundamental changes to UU. Their approach to the lack of racial diversity and shrinking membership is an authoritarian, illiberal, dogmatic approach. (UU World 2021) (Schneider 2019)

The anti-racism, anti-oppression philosophy UUA leaders have adopted is an extreme, dogmatic form of critical race theory (CRT) incorporating the ideas of Ibram X. Kendi, author of *How to Be an Anti-Racist*, and Robin DiAngelo, author of *White Fragility*. *White Fragility* is published by the UUA's publisher Beacon Press.

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## 5 What is Critical Race Theory (CRT)?

Critical race theory (CRT) is a general group of ideologies designed to address racial inequality in society. It is an application of critical theory developed by a group of Marxist scholars called the Frankfurt School at the University of Frankfurt. Critical theory has been applied to not just race but many areas, including gender and disabilities. (Cole 2019) (Nickerson 20220)

Critical race theory originally was an American law school tool used to identify racial inequities in laws, such as inequities in drug sentencing. However, its ideas have spread to be applied more widely in American society and institutions. While it is not directly taught in K-12 schools, it is often the basic philosophical framework used. There are variations and different interpretations of CRT, with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) adopting an extreme version incorporating the reductionist ideas of Ibram X. Kendi and Robin DiAngelo. (Smith 2020) (Kendi 2019)

### **The following are some key ideas of critical race theory (CRT):**

#### **Critical race theory is a macro not a micro view of society**

CRT looks at society only at the large level, not at the personal level. CRT categorizes people in large racial groups and doesn't consider people as unique individuals.

This is not to say adherents of CRT do not see people as individuals or say interpersonal one-to-one relations are unimportant. However, CRT does not look at people or society that way. It feels that the ills of society can be solved only by large-scale manipulation of generic racial and other groups.

#### **CRT feels that racism is an ordinary experience of racial minorities**

CRT feels that, due to the way American society and culture were made, racism is the normal way society does business and is the common experience of racial minorities. Robin DiAngelo says that "White identity is inherently racist." In *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, law professors Richard Delgado and Jean Stefaic write, "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.” (DiAngelo 2019) (Delgado and Stefancic 2018)

Video: [Robin DiAngelo: Debunking The Most Common Myths White People Tell About Race](#)

### **CRT says that race is a social construct, not a biological construct.**

It says that race is not objective, inherent or fixed, and categories are invented and manipulated to create and uphold power.

### **CRT argues against liberalism and Western Enlightenment ideals**

Unlike traditional civil rights movements that believe in incremental progress and treating everyone equally, critical race theory wants to completely dismantle Western society. CRT questions Western Enlightenment, liberalism, reason, objectivity, judicial equality, individualism and the free market. It believes these things were designed and used to keep the dominant peoples in power. Critical race theorists believe that American institutions such as the Constitution, Bill of Rights and the legal system were made and used to uphold white dominance. (Delgado and Stefancic 2018) (New Discourses 2019) (Lindsey J 2021)

CRT is radical. A difference between radicalism and liberalism is that liberalism wishes to fix the problems in the system, while radicalism wants to take down the entire system.

### **CRT sets up all of society and its peoples into a binary oppressor versus oppressed model**

According to CRT and the theory of intersectionality you are either a victim or an oppressor in society based on your demographic. Due to their inherent privilege, whites are oppressors, while blacks are inherently oppressed. Certain non-white groups that are deemed privileged or successful in the system are categorized as “white adjacent.” These can include Ashkenazi and Misrahi Jews and Asian groups. In the theory of intersectionality, other demographics (gender, sexuality, disability, etc.) are similarly assigned to an oppressor versus victim socio-political-economic model. (KuoI 2018) (Aguilar 2017)

It views American history through this lens. Critical race theorists argue that America was founded on racism, slavery, and white privilege, and remains a fundamentally racist nation. (Wikipedia 2021) (Southern Poverty Law Center)

**CRT believes whites will only support change when it is in their interests****CRT believes in the restriction of freedom of speech and expression**

Kendi and others say free speech supports the dominant views. It believes that platforming the dominant views drowns out and harms the marginalized voices. (Kendi 2015)

In the First Amendment Encyclopedia, Professor Chris Damaske writes, “In general, (CRT) scholars argue that there is no societal value in protecting speech that targets already oppressed groups. They also question the logic of using the First Amendment to protect speech that not only has no social value but also is socially and psychologically damaging to minority groups.”

**Further reading: Critical Race Theory article in First Amendment Encyclopedia**

**CRT considers the entire dominant American system and culture to be inherently racist. This means CRT believes that any support or participation in the systems, and even being neutral about systems, upholds the system and is racist.**

As it feels the system perpetuates racial disparities, CRT feels that anyone who contributes or participates in it upholds racism and patriarchy. This is why some say that white people, by being inescapably privileged in the system, are inherently racist. Kendi says that you are either an anti-racist or a racist, and that being neutral or “not racist” is racist.

**CRT believes in equity instead of equality**

Equality means equal treatment of all under the law. However, as it believes the whole system is structurally biased against racial minorities, CRT says that equal treatment, color blindness and meritocracy only perpetuate the racist system and are racist. If a standardized test has racial disparity in outcome or a college science school has racial disparity, CRT says the test and school are racist.

Equity means doing things to create equal outcomes. This includes discrimination against people due to their race, hiring quotas, removing standardized tests and implementing affirmative action in universities. Kendi says the only remedy to racist discrimination is “antiracist discrimination,” that the only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination, and the only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.

Equality is perceived as creating equal opportunities, while equity means having equal outcomes. CRT focuses on outcomes. Under CRT, people are not treated equally.

### **CRT believes there is a monolithic white culture**

CRT feels certain qualities are monolithic to white culture and uphold white power in society. These qualities include hard work, punctuality, worship of the written word, valuing of ownership of goods and land, perfectionism, binary thinking, individualism, urgency, power hoarding, objectivity, defensiveness, and a belief that there is “only one right way of doing things.” Science, logic and rationality are often categorized as “white ways of thinking.” (McClone 2020)

#### **Further reading:**

“White Culture: Adapted From Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups  
Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork” (City of Madison WI)

### **CRT says only racial minorities can accurately talk about race and racism**

CRT believes in centering the voices of racial minorities, and decentering white voices. It believes minority status brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism, while being white presumes inherent incompetence and ignorance on the topic. It believes that the majority can never truly understand the minority experience. Robin DiAngelo says, “To be white is to be functionally illiterate about race.”

### **CRT believes in minorities’ personal subjective experience, or ‘lived experience,’ as truth**

According to CRT, as racial minorities have the presumed competence to speak about race and racism, their lived experiences and subjective perceptions and feelings take epistemological precedence over outside objective facts or views from culturally dominant people. Remember that objectivity, logic and science are viewed skeptically as they are deemed “white ways of thinking” used to uphold the oppressive system. As a way of upending the dominant narrative, the subjective personal perceptions and stories of the minority are to be accepted and should not be questioned by the whites.

## **Terms associated with CRT and its anti-racism approach**

Critical race theory and CRT-informed anti-racism have a variety of terms, often rewriting commonly used terms. Even when the term critical race theory is not used, the use of the following and other words imply CRT as an ideological framework: diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), anti-racism, white supremacy culture, dismantling white supremacy, white fragility, whiteness, BIPOC, Latinx, colonizers, intersectionality. (Heritage Foundation 2020)

The following are some key terms and how they are defined by CRT:

### **Racism/racism/racist**

CRT has a different than commonly used definition.

In common usage, racism means personally believing one race is better than another. It means racial prejudice, hatred or discrimination.

In CRT, racism means systemic or institutional racism. It means one racial group has the power to carry out systematic discrimination through institutional policies, practices of society and culture that uphold the power and practices. People don't have to have personal prejudice to participate in and uphold that system. The mere act of working to uphold the system, including by following norms of the dominant culture, is considered racist and racism.

### **Anti-racist**

According to CRT, anti-racism is doing things to help dismantle the system or to help make changes to racial equity.

According to Kendi, a person or political policy is either anti-racist or racist. As he considers the system itself racist and working to oppress racial minorities, he believes that even being neutral or calling oneself "not racist" is racist.

[Video: How To Be An Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi](#)

### **White supremacy/White supremacy culture**

Despite its common association with the KKK and Neo-Nazis, CRT defines white supremacy as all of white and dominant culture. CRT believes the whole structure and culture keep whites in

power over others. Such things as liberalism, logic, freedom of speech, critical thinking, mathematics and Robert's Rules are part of white supremacy culture or "whiteness."

**Further reading: A lengthy list of anti-racism, equity and inclusion terminology from Florida State University**

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## 6 Positive Aspects of CRT

I am a critic of critical race theory and reject illiberalism, authoritarianism, dogma and racial essentialism in both the political right and left. However, I believe critical race theory offers important points and insights. The following are examples of agreement.

Despite great progress over the years, racial and other demographic disparities still exist in the American economy, society and education. The sometimes contentious debates in the country, including within the minority groups themselves, are why these disparities exist and how they should be addressed, not that they don't exist.

CRT is correct that race is a social and political rather than a biological construct, and that it has been used to discriminate against racial minorities. Black and white were largely inventions of whites in America to justify slavery, Jim Crow laws and other discrimination. Jews have been pigeon-holed into different racial categories, including being classified by the Nazis as an inferior race and today as "whites." (Onwuachi-Willis 2016)

All countries and societies have dominant cultures that oppress minorities and different ways of thinking. Part of my cognitive science and philosophy work is in neurodiversity. People with mental disorders such as ADHD, dyslexia and autism have trouble fitting in with the dominant culture. I have written about how society must learn to appreciate and accommodate such "different thinkers," both for the individual's and society's benefit. Societies need heterodoxy and diversity. (Sowell 2010) (Cycleback 2021)

CRT has been useful at identifying legal inequalities, such as in drug sentencing.

Science, logic and reason are invaluable ways of thinking. However, CRT is correct that there are other important ways of thinking. Areas such as morality, ethics, art, spirituality and quality of life are beyond the scope of science and logic. It is also true that academic philosophy and science in practice have had a history of biases against minorities, and this has to be rectified. I support CRT's idea of including different ways of thinking and cultures and ridding science and other academic areas of racism, sexism and other bigotry. (Oreskes 2020)

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## 7 Criticisms of Critical Race Theory

As described in chapter 8, critical race theory (CRT) is considered and used in different ways. The focus here is when people dogmatically use CRT as the overriding lens for everything. Kendi's and DiAngelo's ideas are examples of such dogmatism and fundamentalism.

The following offers some common areas of criticism of CRT.

### **All forms of dogmatism, illiberalism and authoritarianism should be rejected**

All knowledge is provisional and all dogma is necessarily wrong.

It is the evangelical dogmatism and fundamentalism of many CRT adherents that turns off so many people including people within the political left. Folks such as Kendi and DiAngelo present their view as dogma, saying that any disagreement with it is wrong and racist. For example, Kendi says "In order to truly be anti-racist, you also have to truly be anti-capitalist." He is thus saying that any minorities who support or participate in capitalism are racist.

Such dogmatic thinking and rhetoric stop dialogue and are unhealthy for communities. (Ruffo 2021) (Lindsay 2020)

#### **Further reading:**

"Fundamentalism: An Enemy of the Common Good" by Fr. Gerald Arbuckle SM PhD

"The Dangers of Dogmatism" by psychologist Kristene A. Doyle, Ph.D.

### **CRT is reductionist and no model can explain everything**

The whole of society and oppression cannot be encompassed by any theory or model. CRT is too simplistic. As with any theory, there are areas outside of its domain and there are experiences that counter it.

Many argue that class must be part of the equation, including in areas such as affirmative action, law and structural changes. (Kahlenberg 2018) (Rubin 2018) (Moss 2003)

Academics Glenn Loury at Brown University, John McWhorter at Columbia University, Thomas Sowell at Stanford and Michael Creswell at Florida State University say that disparities in outcomes are often due to more than just present racism, often pointing to cultural differences and other historical factors. (McWhorter 2020) (Sowell 2005) (Knight-Laurie 2022) (Creswell 2022)

Stanford law professor Ralph Richard Banks says that many things are going on in society and that “Focusing only on race is a mistake. Once you start to divide society into the oppressed and the impressions and the black people are always on the downside and the white people are always the possessors of privilege, I think that's a mistake. It's a mistake to fixate on the idea of white privilege because most white people in American society are not and don't feel themselves to be privileged. Most white people in American society are actually struggling. They're struggling to raise their children. They worry about whether their children's lives will be better than their own. They confront all manner of illness and distress and economic anxiety. So it's both analytically wrong and politically misguided to promote an ideology that suggests that all white people have it good and all black people have it bad.” (Manhattan Institute 2021)

Harvard law professor Randall Kennedy says that many CRT adherents' belief that race is the sole primary factor in the ills of society creates a “danger of race narcissism.” (Manhattan Institute 2021)

### **Critical race theory is an ideology, not a theory**

Despite its name, critical race theory is not a theory but an ideology. Theories must be falsifiable, meaning empirically testable, and CRT is not. CRT begs questions and uses circular logic. It presents unproven assertions that are expected to just be accepted. (Losada 2020) (Church 2010)

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign associate professor of sociology Ilana Redstone writes, “The problem is that CRT and its related ideas form a closed system. It’s a perspective that leaves no space for anyone, no matter how well-intentioned, to see the world differently. When presented as the singular valid worldview, it isn’t a productive way to engage with students, groups, or with one another.” (Redstone 2018)

Economist Jonathan Church writes, “Unfortunately, in so blithely dismissing individualism, DiAngelo hinges her theory so heavily on collective, rather than individual, identity and experience that it dies on the sword of a logical fallacy,” and “[When Kendi] sees racial disparities, he sees racism. As nature abhors a vacuum, Kendi abhors any analysis of racial inequality that 'racism' cannot explain. This reflexive mono-causality gives us a basic logical fallacy in Kendi's work: the fallacy of affirming the consequent.” (Church 2019) (Church 2020)

In *Why Ibram Kendi's Antiracism is So Flawed*, Carleton College education studies professor Jeffrey Aaron Snyder writes, "Kendi offers up a tantalizing promise that has proven highly seductive for many Americans who are waking up to the realities of racial injustice. It is a choose-your-own adventure where you always have just two options: racist or antiracist. This either-or paradigm, alas, presents a highly misleading picture of the nature and consequences of ideas, policies and social movements. It describes a world that never was and never will be— a world without contradictions, ironies or unintended consequences." (Snyder 2021)

Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community (UUJEC) inequality expert Dick Burkhart PhD wrote: "CRT is not grounded in the social sciences, but is a collection of ideologies, often characterized by speculation, prejudice, and sophistry, growing out of the subjectivity of postmodern philosophy."

All models, theories and ideologies should be examined and questioned. All have limits, problems and blind spots. A common complaint of CRT critics such as Loury and Coleman Hughes is that CRT advocates such as Kendi and DiAngelo won't debate them. (Pluckrose 2020) (McWhorter 2020) (Hughes 2020)

### **CRT anti-racism can be authoritarian**

Aspects of CRT and extreme antiracism ideology are about the dismantling of institutions and culture. Ibram X. Kendi proposed the following constitutional amendment to create a Federal Department of Anti-Racism:

"To fix the original sin of racism, Americans should pass an anti-racist amendment to the U.S. Constitution that enshrines two guiding anti-racist principles: Racial inequity is evidence of racist policy and the different racial groups are equals. The amendment would make unconstitutional racial inequity over a certain threshold, as well as racist ideas by public officials (with "racist ideas" and "public official" clearly defined). It would establish and permanently fund the Department of Anti-racism (DOA) comprised of formally trained experts on racism and no political appointees. The DOA would be responsible for preclearing all local, state and federal public policies to ensure they won't yield racial inequity, monitor those policies, investigate private racist policies when racial inequity surfaces, and monitor public officials for expressions of racist ideas. The DOA 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." (Kendi 2019)

Philosopher and social critic Coleman Hughes writes that "Kendi's ideas are openly totalitarian." Much of the illiberalism, censorship, circular logic, dogmatism and cancel culture associated

with extreme social justice ideologues are because an ideology for changing the whole of society only works when the masses follow them.

**Further reading:**

"How to Be an Anti-Intellectual" by Coleman Hughes

**CRT and the teachings of Kendi and DiAngelo divide rather than unite people, making it counterproductive to social justice**

Whether or not you agree with them, CRT and Kendi's and DiAngelo's views are extreme, radical approaches that oppose commonly held ideals of most Americans. These and other approaches are inherently controversial, fanning the flame of culture wars and tribalism and making dysfunctional communities. They cause division and strife even within the political left. This makes them counterproduct to social justice. (Cillizza 2021) (Lind 2020) (Zucher 2021) (Schlott 2020) (Thandeka 2009)

David Bernstein of the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values believes that "an ideological formula that prioritizes collective culpability over individual responsibility will only exacerbate racial tensions." Retired Arizona State University political science professor Anne. L. Schneider writes, "We need a unifying strategy, not a divisive and segregated strategy; we need 'we' working together in multi-racial groups as advocates for justice." (Bernstein 2020) (Schneider 2019)

In her often cited 1999 Unitarian Universalist General Assembly speech *Why Anti-Racism Will Fail*, Rev Thandeka said that dogmatic CRT methods used by UU "violate the first principle of our UU covenant together to actively affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person," and "They make an erroneous assumption about the nature and structure of power in America." (Thandeka 1999)

Studies have shown that DiAngelo-style antiracism training not only doesn't work but makes things worse. (Chait 2020) (Dobbin & Kalev) (al-Gharbi)

**Further reading:**

"Why I Reject Critical Race Theory: I'm a Democrat and a liberal but I find the theory unconvincing and offensive" by former Madison Wisconsin Democratic Mayor Dave Cieslewicz

"Diversity Training Doesn't Work": Harvard Business Review

**Liberalism and Western Enlightenment ideals are important**

The majority of Americans support Western Enlightenment ideals. They see liberalism as the best way to create a just world and long-lasting social and political progress. They fear recent movements in both the far left and far right towards illiberalism, authoritarianism, suppression of freedom of speech and expression and individual rights, skepticism of logic and reason and even democracy. CRT points out legitimate problems in society, but its response to them is too extreme. The dismissal of objectivity, reason, legal equality, meritocracy, individualism, freedom of expression and capitalism is throwing out the baby with the bathwater. (Pluckrose 2021)

Liberalism is imperfect and, as with all systems including science, must continually work to improve. It is true that the United States originally offered equality, justice, democracy and freedom of speech only for white men. The answer to such inequality and injustice is not to throw out these things, but to extend them to all Americans. That was the dream of Martin Luther King Jr and Frederick Douglass.

The skepticism of science and critical thinking within extreme left social justice movements is dangerous and bad for democracy. Rejection of science and lack of critical thinking exists in both the right and left. (Goldhill 2018) (Soh 2017) (Shermer (2013) (Tucker 2021)

“Liberal Religion”, A sermon delivered by UU minister Rev. Rick Hoyt-McDaniels

A letter to our fellow Jews on equality and liberal values (Jewish Institute for Liberal Values)

**Racial stereotyping and racial essentialism are ignorant and racist**

Defining any race, ethnicity, nationality or large group as monolithically “all this” or “all that” is a simplistic and ignorant stereotyping that one would think anti-racism is supposedly aspiring to overcome. Racial essentialism is wrong, whether it is by the far right or the far left. That some in today’s far left do it doesn’t make it any less racist than when those in the far right do it.

Saying that some people over others inherently have more knowledge or grasp of the truth solely based on the color of their skin is ignorant and racist. Communities, such as Unitarian Universalist congregations, where people are treated and their voices valued differently based on their demographic make for unhealthy, dysfunctional organizations. It is a step back in social justice not a step forward, especially in a church whose first principle is “The inherent worth and

dignity of every person.” Trying to solve racism with racism is irrational and only makes things worse.

Journalist and author of *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*, Bari Weiss said that there is “good anti-racism and bad anti-racism,” and that the bad kind is the current neoracist version pushed by DiAngelo and Kendi. Weiss says that good anti-racism “reflects the idea that we should be judged by the content of our character and not the color of our skin, the kind of anti-racism that insists on our common humanity, the kind of anti-racism that no one should be inheritors of collective guilt or inheritors of collective innocence, that we should all be judged as individuals.” (Weiss 2020)

The idea that whites are a monolith and have a single culture is ignorant. There is great diversity of cultures of whites. It’s bizarre to claim that Scandinavians and Southern Italians, or whites in the Bronx and rural Iowa are “all the same.” The idea that blacks are one cultural group due to the color of their skin is ignorant. Glenn Loury doesn’t capitalize black, because he says “blacks,” “whites,” “yellows” and “browns” simply aren’t whole, monolithic groups.

The idea that mathematics, science and logic are “white ways of thinking” is not only racist but ignorant about the history of these areas. For example, mathematical logic is not a product of the West. Africa, the Middle East, South America and Southeast Asia were integral to its development long before it ever reached Europe. A symbol for zero was first used in Cambodia, and the Western numeral system is Hindu-Arabic. Logic is an innate neurological way of thinking universal to all people. (Loury & McWhorter 2021)

A white math professor at the University of Chicago said that if he told students that math was “a white way not a black way of thinking” he’d be fired right away. Demonizing math and science economically hurts minorities in a country and world that values such areas.

CRT’s stereotypes about “whiteness” and other forms of racial essentialism have been discredited as false and unscientific.

Tema Okun's "White Supremacy Culture" work is bad by Matthew Yglesias

Evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne on The Smithsonian Institution's Generalizations about “Whiteness”

“Why I Don’t Capitalize ‘Black’”: Glenn Loury & John McWhorter

“When Keeping It ‘Woke’ Gets Racist, Liberals Should Say So” by Eric Levitz

CRT’s categorization of successful Asians and Hispanics as white or “white adjacent” is controversial. The categorizing of Jews as “white” and part of the “white supremacy” is

offensive to many Jews, with the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values saying that CRT erases Jewish identity.

"WA school district apologizes for excluding Asians as POC" (Northwest Asian Weekly)

"Jews Are Not White," by Rabbi Michael Lerner

"The 'Whitening' of Asian Americans", by Iris Kuo

"Critical Social Justice Ideology and Antisemitism" by the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values

"Critical Race Theory and the 'Hyper White Jew' by Pamela Pareski of the Stevanovich Institute

"Critical Theory and the Jewish Dilemma" by University of Chicago evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne

John McWhorter has written that DiAngelo's ideas expressed in *White Fragility* are racist and harmful to blacks. He writes: "*White Fragility* is racist, and I don't mean that Robin DiAngelo is a racist. I'm not calling her that. But I'm saying that if you write a book that teaches that Black people's feelings must be stepped around to an exquisitely sensitive degree that hasn't been required of any human beings, you're condescending to Black people. In supposing that Black people have no resilience, you are saying that Black people are unusually weak. You're saying that we are lesser. You're saying that we, because of the circumstances of American social history, cannot be treated as adults. And in the technical sense, that's discriminatory."

Linguist John McWhorter Says 'White Fragility' Is Condescending Toward Black People

"Progressive Stereotypes Hurt Black Communities" by Jamil Jivani

The American color-coded categories of race are eccentric, shallow and different from other places in the world. Depending on the prevailing or particular political and ideological sentiments in the United States, Japanese, Latinos, Irish, Greeks, Ashkenazis and Arabs have fallen in and out of the "white" category. Armenians have alternately been classified in the United States as "yellow," "white" and "brown." Though, if you ask Armenians, they usually will reject any color label, as that is not how they, and many other non-Westerners, define race. I attended a lecture on Islam by two Somali immigrants to the United States. One said they didn't like it when Americans called them black "because that's not how Somalis view people." (Arzoumanian 2020)

In the name of fighting bigotry, it makes no sense that people would want to reinforce such shallow, ephemeral, only skin-deep biases. This is something humans should evolve past.

When Americans apply their American-centric racial views to other places in the world it has caused offense and shows how peculiar are the American perceptions. An example is when some Americans call the Holocaust “white on white” violence. Law professor David Bernstein says this is not only ignorant but a sign of “intellectual moral decay.” (Sowell 2021) (Bernstein 2016)

Whoopi Goldberg's American Idea of Race

Thomas Sowell: “Facts About Slavery They Don’t Teach You In School”

**The claim that one minority group over another has more knowledge of truth and that the perceptions of minorities cannot be questioned is irrational and racist**

To disrupt the dominant narrative and in the name of equity, CRT says the personal subjective perceptions of racial minorities must be accepted and cannot be questioned by the dominant culture. It is perceived as causing “harm” to ask for reasons or evidence.

The idea that anyone’s emotional perception is objective and unquestionable truth clearly is false, in particular considering different people of the same demographic have different perceptions. Psychologist Jonathan Haidt says that such emotional thinking “as proof” is cognitive distortion (Seager 2018,

Harvard Law Professor Randall Kennedy said about CRT: “And then there was a second argument that was being made, which was that minority people had a sort of special insight into certain areas of culture, certain areas of law. And I pushed back against that because I think that in the area of culture in the intellectual realm, we shouldn't be putting up racial fences.” (Manhattan Intuttie 2021)

Bari Weiss says that it is wrong to say that “certain people have more hold of the truth and are more morally pure because of the amount of melanin in their skin.” (Manhattan Institute 2021)

**Further reading:**

"We Love 'Lived Experience' . . . Until it Undermines the Narrative” by Kimi Katiti

**CRT’s rejection of liberalism is harmful to many minorities**

Members from two minority groups in the United States that often harshly criticize CRT and Kendi-style anti-racism are Jews and Asians. Many Jews and many Asian groups have thrived under American meritocracy and liberal institutions, and object to being categorized as "white adjacent" when they do well in the system.

San Francisco School board members were recalled by a large margin in 2022 in part after they wanted to do away with meritocracy for getting into one of the elite public schools. The biggest and most vocal demographic behind the recall was Asian-Americans. At the very least, this demonstrates that there is no one voice for racial, ethnic or other minorities and that most minorities don't agree that "we must dismantle Western society and Enlightenment ideals." (Chen 2022)

Author of the book *An Inconvenient Minority: The Attack on Asian American Excellence and the Fight for Meritocracy*, Kenny Xu writes: "The problem is that CRT implicitly defines every good societal outcome as 'white.' Based on the data, this necessarily puts Asian Americans in a 'white adjacent' box that completely ignores their unique cultures and historical struggles. Furthermore, if being rich and successful are necessarily 'white' characteristics, the implication is that other races are not, or cannot be, successful, talented or educated. Despite pretending to care about diversity and inclusion, CRT is actually racist in the way it implicitly categorizes groups of people."

Samuel Goldman, professor of political science and executive director of the John L. Loeb Jr. Institute for Religious Freedom at George Washington University, writes, "The reduction of American history to an unbroken story of racial oppression comes at particular cost to Jews. Because we have been among the greatest beneficiaries of liberal institutions, we are unavoidably targets when those institutions abandon or reject their liberal mission. A widely despised and persecuted people who thrived in America like nowhere else, Jews do not fit into the sharp distinction between oppressor and oppressed that characterized ideological 'antiracism.' Therefore, Jewish experiences must either be ignored or reduced to a monolithic conception of white supremacy." (Goldman 2021)

### **Further reading:**

"Critical Race Theory has No Idea What to Do With Asians" by Kenny Xu

"Stop Being Shocked: American liberalism is in danger from a new ideology—one with dangerous implications for Jews" by Bari Weiss

### **CRT is a minority view of minorities**

For any demographic, there is no one voice, no one view, no one theory, no one language, no one way of looking at the world. Respecting any demographic is knowing and respecting that there is a wide variety of philosophies, views, political persuasions, language and opinions in the group. Disability, skin color, gender or nationality isn't an ideology or a political position. Someone who advocates for wheelchair accessibility might be a Democrat or a Republican. A saying about the autistic is "If you've met one autistic person, you've met one autistic person." Educator Irshad Manji says, "Just because I'm gay, just because I'm Muslim, doesn't mean I think any particular way." Expectations of ideological and political conformity are the antithesis of multiculturalism and diversity.

Erec Smith, Professor of Rhetoric at York College and co-editor of *Journal of Free Black Thought*, writes, "Black thought varies as widely as black individuals. There are black conservatives and liberals, socialists and free-marketeers, traditionalists and radicals, theists and atheists, everything in between, and more besides. Free Black Thought seeks to represent the rich diversity of black thought beyond the relatively narrow spectrum of views promoted by mainstream outlets as defining 'the black perspective.'" (Smith 2020)

John McWhorter says that the critical race theory is "not the general black view of things." Glenn Loury, the first tenured black American economics professor at Harvard, strongly objects when only a certain point of view amongst the great diversity of black thought is represented as the "authentic black voice." Former Bernie Sanders National Press Secretary and podcaster Briahana Joy Gray says about her podcast discussions, "I always love to talk with heterodox voices across the political spectrum, particularly those that make it clear that there is not one Black voice." (McWhorter 2021) (Loury 2021) (Gray in Loury 2021)

Some of the strongest objections to critical race theory have come from racial and ethnic minorities, such as McWhorter, Loury, Thomas Sowell, Manji, Bari Weiss and Coleman Hughes. The following are some.

The Neoracists A new religion is preached across America. It's nonsense posing as wisdom."

By John McWhorter

"Wrestle not against flesh and blood", by Glenn Loury

"Critical Race Theory is Not the New 'Civil Rights Movement.' Quite the Opposite" by

Kenny Xu and Christian Watson

"What Is Antiracism and What Is the Problem with It?" By George A. Yancey

"Asian Americans Emerging as a Strong Voice Against Critical Race Theory" by Helen Raleigh

"An Ideology Many Jews Bought into Fuels Antisemitism" by David Bernstein

"The Warped Vision of "Anti-Racism" by Batya Ungar-Sargon

"Notes on Woke Racism" by Michael D.C. Bowen

Irshad Manji in UUCS Sunday Service October 25, 2020, with Rev. Rick Davis, Irshad Manji and Rev. Dr. Todd Eklof

Anti-Racism and Anti-Semitism Collide: Glenn Loury in Conversation with Bari Weiss

"Shattering the White Fragility' Myth", with Kmele Foster and Katie Herzog

"Why No One Should Accept a 'Critical Ethnic Studies' Curriculum. Least of All Jews" by Pamela Paresky and Lee Jussim

"On Being a Token" by Sarah Haider

Video: "New Paradigms in Black-Jewish Relations (The Jewish Institute for Liberal Values)"

Critical Race Theory: On the New Ideology of Race

### **Illiberalism, censorship, dogmatism and expectations of ideological conformity oppress minorities**

Expectations of ideological, political, language and religious conformity are oppressive of minority and marginalized groups. It is also the antithesis of diversity, inclusion and multiculturalism. Irshad Manji says that diversity "means including different points of view, and not just different religions, sexualities, genders and races."

What is perplexing are the people who support the suppression of freedom of speech and expression and don't seem to think their speech and views would be suppressed. For ideological agenda, some extreme social justice activists promote such suppression and censorship. They don't seem to realize that, if suppression of speech and ideas became the law and norm of the land, theirs would be amongst the first to be suppressed. The freedom is what protects their right, and the right of other minority and marginalized groups, to express their views. The dominant, popularly expressed opinion needs no such protection.

Judaism and Jewish culture are about diversity of viewpoints, debate, questioning and dissent. Dogmatism, illiberalism and censorship are thus particularly oppressive of Jews. A Jewish friend resigned from his Unitarian Universalist congregation last year due to the dogmatism and groupthink. I said, "Being Jewish means asking questions and debating, different viewpoints. Not allowing questioning or debating would make Unitarian Universalism inhospitable to Jews." He replied: "And– dare I say it?– antisemitic." (Wolpe 2019) (Jewish Learning 2019) (Raucher 2015)

In her New York Times column *Do Progressives Have a Free Speech Problem?*, Michelle Goldberg writes, "Writing in the 1990s, at a time when feminists like Catharine MacKinnon sought to curtail free speech in the name of equality, the great left-libertarian Ellen Willis described how progressive movements sow the seeds of their own destruction when they become censorious. It's impossible, Willis wrote, 'to censor the speech of the dominant without stifling debate among all social groups and reinforcing orthodoxy within left movements. Under such conditions a movement can neither integrate new ideas nor build support based on genuine transformations of consciousness rather than guilt or fear of ostracism.'" (Goldberg 2021)

Video: [Irshad Manji: Diversity Based On Labels Is Not Diversity At All](#)

### **The majority of Americans and minorities support meritocracy, equality and the hope for a colorblind society**

As they feel they uphold the dominant culture and oppression, fundamentalist CRT advocates and folks such as Kendi and Diangelo are against meritocracy and the hope for a colorblind society. This view is out of step with most Americans. Martin Luther King Jr who said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Meritocracy was introduced as a revolutionary way to overcome nepotism and has been used as a way to base occupational and educational mobility on skill. The 2020 Affirmative Action Referendum in California showed that support for meritocracy and equality had grown there, including amongst racial and ethnic minorities. (Friedersdorf)

"The War on Meritocracy: Meritocracy made the modern world. Now the revolt against merit threatens to unmake it," by Adrian Wooldridge

Writer and social worker Brandy Shufutinsky is for a colorblind society, explaining: "Being colorblind doesn't mean you don't see someone's color. Of course, you see that I'm black and I

want you to see that I'm black. I'm proud of being black. Colorblind means you don't do things or make choices based on someone's color." (JILV 2020)

Bari Weiss said: "I just fundamentally believe that we should be fighting for a world in which there are no caste systems, in which people are judged based on their individual merit and character, in which we move from the historical construct of race, rather than reifying it. I just don't think you look at history and believe making people fixated on their immutable characteristics and saying those immutable characteristics have immutable power leads to anywhere good" (Manhattan Institute 2021)

Social justice activist and organizer of the March on Washington and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Bayard Rustin famously said, "If we desire a society of peace, then we cannot achieve such a society through violence. If we desire a society without discrimination, then we must not discriminate against anyone in the process of building this society. If we desire a society that is democratic, then democracy must become a means as well as an end."

Glenn Loury writes: "Martin Luther King had the right idea with colorblindness, yet today it's regarded as a microaggression to say one doesn't see color. Of course, it's impossible literally not to see color, but despite pressure from cultural elites, we needn't give it the overarching significance we now do. In fact, if we're going to make our experiment in democracy work, we mustn't give it such significance." (Loury 2021)

State University of New York Professor Sheena Mason, libertarian Kmele Foster and former black nationalist Reinard Knight-Laure believe that the only way to overcome racism is to deemphasize race. (Loury and McWhorter 2021).

"Theory of Racelessness: A Case for Antirace(ism) To Eliminate Racism We Must Eliminate Race" by Sheena Mason

"True Anti-Racism Means Being Anti-Race" by Reinard Knight-Laurie

"Conversations about race should acknowledge diverse perspectives" by Sita Nataraj Slavov

Educator Z. K. Paschal, Loury and McWhorter see the lowering of standards to accommodate minorities as condescending and "an implicit statement of our lack of confidence in our capacity to do what others have done." Loury calls it a "bigotry of low expectations." While he believes in accommodations and some affirmative action, Loury also believes that removing meritocracy would damage universities and government. (Loury 2019) (Loury & McWhorter 2021) (Creswell 2022)

The Infantilization of Blackness | Glenn Loury & John McWhorter | The Glenn Show

"Closing the Racial Academic Achievement Gap: Whose Responsibility Is It?": by Michael Creswell

"Not Some Poor Little Black Fellow: Langston Hughes' Relevance to Our Moment"  
by Z.K. Paschal

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## **8 Is CRT Itself Illiberal or is CRT Just Sometimes Applied Illiberally?**

A regular question of debate is whether critical race theory itself is dogmatic, illiberal and authoritarian. or is it that some people use it in a dogmatic, illiberal and authoritarian manner.

Numerous academics say that CRT is dogmatic and Orwellian. After all, CRT itself talks about undermining the Western Enlightenment and liberal ideas and dismantling current society. Many of Kendi's and DiAngelo's ideas are authoritarian and dogmatic.

However, there are CRT advocates who are not dogmatic or illiberal. There are advocates who know that CRT is imperfect, and cannot be the only lens through which to view society. They do not shame or silence people based on their race. They support individual rights and freedom of expression and they disagree with the divisive teaching approach of DiAngelo and others. One CRT supporter I know said, "Of course, I support freedom of expression. I'm a librarian."

I debate this issue with a professor friend who calls herself "woke" and supports CRT. She does not interpret CRT in any sort of authoritarian, racially essentialist way. She sees the dogmatists and illiberals as "bad apples." She disagreed with the recent canceling of Dorian Abbott, a University of Chicago professor who had a major lecture canceled because he said he supported meritocracy. She knows that there are other forms of racism that are not covered by CRT. She dislikes the divisive and shaming teaching methods of DiAngelo. As a professor of medicine and a physician, she strongly supports science, logic, debate and critical thinking.

In the following essay Loyola Marymount University constitutional law professor Evan Gerstman writes that the backlash against CRT isn't against the theory itself but the methods some use to teach it.

### Denying The Abuses Of Critical Race Theory And Cancel Culture by Evan Gerstman

University of Chicago professor Jerry Coyne writes that there are different versions and interpretations of CRT. This means that one should judge people or groups by what they do and specifically say, as opposed to merely by whether or not they support CRT.

Coyne suggests that, as it means and suggests so many things to different people, the term critical race theory should be dropped from our vocabulary.

**Both the Left and the Right misunderstand and distort what is CRT**

Coyne and sociology professor Ilana Redstone write that people both within the political right and left mischaracterize CRT for their political purposes.

Coyne says the left media and politicians tend to falsely whitewash CRT and its use, such as deceptively saying "It's only a legal theory used in laws schools and is not taught in elementary schools" and falsely saying "It's merely the real, objective history of race and slavery in the United States." Coyne says that, on the other hand, the right media and politicians tend to overstate CRT and use it to prevent much racial justice education and minimize the effects of racism. (Coyne 2022)

Coyne writes "a pox on both ideological houses." However, he says that, between the two, the political right's description of CRT tends to be more accurate. (Coyne 202)

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## 9 Comparisons of Dogmatic Social Justice Activism to Fundamental Religion

Numerous academics and experts have compared critical race theory and the Unitarian Universalist Association's dogmatic version of anti-racism ideology to a religion. Writes political scientist Art Keller, "It is not a particularly unique observation to notice that the Critical Social Justice movement, particularly the part that embraces Critical Race Theory, bears tremendous resemblance to a secular religion." (Keller 2020)

The ideology is full of Abrahamic ideas of original sin, spiritual awakening ("woke"), blasphemy, thought and expression control, suspension of disbelief, believers versus unbelievers and moral versus immoral, repentance, admission of sin, submission to authority, binary thinking, calling those who do not fully subscribe to the theory immoral ("racists," "upholders of white supremacy"). The Unitarian Universalist Association, UU World magazine and UU leaders regularly describe it in religious terms. Some UUs, including ministers, have compared the model and the new UUA to Catholicism and Calvinism.

Sociology professors Bradley Campbell, of California State University Los Angeles, and Jason Manning, of the University of West Virginia, write: "I think it's similar to a lot of utopian political movements in having similarities to religion. Those at the forefront of the movement, who wholeheartedly embrace an oppression/victimhood worldview derived from Critical Theory, and who see it as providing a basis for a call for repentance and change in their own lives and the lives of others, and as a call to restructure social institutions, seem to have embraced something very much like a religion." (Campbell & Manning 2018)

John McWhorter is the author of the book *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America*. In the following video *How Anti-Racism Hurts Black People*, he explains not only how he believes the current critical race theory form of anti-racism is a religion, but how it hurts racial justice. A promoter of critical thinking, McWhorter is firmly against all forms of illiberalism, fundamentalism and dogmatism.

He says, "Anti-racism, as currently configured, has gone a long way from what used to be considered intelligent and sincere civil rights activism. Today it is a religion. And I don't mean that as a rhetorical faint. It is what any naive anthropologist would recognize as a religion."

**Video:** [John McWhorter, "How Anti-Racism Hurts Black People"](#)

Unitarian Universalist author Jim Aikin writes, “McWhorter’s thesis is that the adherents of ‘woke’ anti-racism are practicing a new religion. It’s not just similar to a religion; it *is* a religion. There’s no higher power, but all of the other components are there. There are celebrity preachers, deadly sins, heretics (who are, inevitably, in need of persecution), a complete rejection of logic, and much more. The woke anti-racist crowd are as fully committed to their faith as Pentecostals or Scientologists.” (Aikin 2022)

Author of the landmark 1953 social psychology book *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, Eric Hoffer wrote how fanatical movements tell their followers to reject logic and reason, and chastise and shame dissenters or even those who merely ask questions. Notice this with fundamentalist promoters of the new ideology. Hoffer wrote how the movements do not see people as individuals but as categories. Again, a hallmark of dogmatic CRT.

Wrote Hoffer, “Mass movements aggressively promote the use of doctrines that elevate faith over reason and serve as fact-proof screens between the faithful and the realities of the world. The doctrine of the mass movement must not be questioned under any circumstances.”

Fundamentalism and dogmatism are a psychology, and fundamentalists and zealots are a psychological-type. Fanatics on the far left and far right are made from the same psychological cloth. The political spectrum is not a line but a circle, and the further one goes to the left the further one moves to the right. Illiberalism and dogmatism used to be associated with the far right, but are found today in many extreme left movements.

Wrote Hoffer: “Though they seem to be at opposite poles, fanatics of all kinds are actually crowded together at one end. It is the fanatic and the moderate who are poles apart and never meet. The fanatics of various hues eye each other with suspicion and are ready to fly at each other’s throat. But they are neighbors and almost of one family. They hate each other with the hatred of brothers.”

Psychologist Valery Tarico was raised an Evangelical Christian and studies evangelical movements. She writes that the current fundamentalist far left critical race theory-informed social justice movements remarkably resemble the fundamentalist evangelical Christianity she was raised in and ultimately escaped.

In the essay *The Righteous and the Woke – Why Evangelicals and Social Justice Warriors Trigger Me in the Same Way*, Terico writes, “It occurred to me recently that my time in Evangelicalism and subsequent journey out have a lot to do with why I find myself reactive to the spread of Woke culture among colleagues, political soulmates, and friends. Christianity takes many forms, with Evangelicalism being one of the more single-minded, dogmatic, groupish and

enthusiastic among them. The Woke—meaning progressives who have ‘awoken’ to the idea that oppression is the key concept explaining the structure of society, the flow of history, and virtually all of humanity’s woes—share these qualities. To a former Evangelical, something feels too familiar—or better said, a bunch of somethings feel too familiar.”

Dr. Valery Terico: “The Righteous and the Woke – Why Evangelicals and Social Justice Warriors Trigger Me in the Same Way:

The question of if critical race theory is a religion is debatable. However, within the context of the UUA’s dogmatic, illiberal and true believer approach and theological rhetoric, their current model is a fundamentalist religion.

### **Recommended further reading:**

Book: *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America* by John McWhorter (Publisher: Portfolio 2021)

Book: *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movement* by Eric Hoffer

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## 10 Language as an Ideological Tool

Authoritarian political, social and religious movements use language to try to force ideological and political conformity.

All areas have jargon, from religion to science to baseball. Jargon has a functional purpose. However, it is sometimes associated with groupthink, conformity and cliques. CRT and CRT-influenced anti-racism acolytes have their ideological terms: White supremacy culture, dismantle, centering and decentering, BIPOC, accountable, white supremacy/white supremacy culture, microaggressions, complicit, dismantle, colonize, intersectionality, accountable, erase/erased, etc.

Psychologist Valerie Tarico writes that the woke “insider jargon” is very similar in nature and purpose to the insider jargon of Christian Evangelicals. (Tarico 2019)

This language is rejected by most minorities. A national poll showed that not only are substantially large majorities of all racial demographics against PC terms, but the top three are American Indians (88%), Latinos (87%) and Asians (82%). Seventy-five percent of black Americans were against PC words. A Latino pollster found that "When it came to 'Latinx,' there was near unanimity. Despite its usage by academics and cultural influencers, 98% of Latinos prefer other terms to describe their ethnicity. Only 2% of our respondents said the label accurately describes them, making it the least popular ethnic label among Latinos." Many Latinos have called white people using Latinx ‘Anglo-Imperialist,’ ‘Anglicizing our language,’ ‘culturally ignorant,’ ‘an elitist attempt to erase a cultural history’ and ‘English speakers imposing their social norms on other cultures.’ (Tarico 2019) (ThinkNow 2019) (Monk 2018) (McWhorter 2022)

CRT and related social-justice activists have taken ordinary words and redefined them to serve their ideological purpose. This causes much communication confusion. According to Kendi and DiAngelo, you are racist if you question or disagree with their theories. As people fear being labeled a racist, such language use and calling out intimidates many into silence. An Ashkenazi Jewish woman who objected to being called a member of the “white supremacy” by people on the far left explained, “It is not a matter of intellectually debating the issue. It simply is offensive.”

When everyone and everything is racist and “white supremacy,” the words lose all meaning.

Writes Unitarian Universalist and author Jim Aiken: “The differences between the KKK and a UU congregation could not possibly be more stark. To use the term ‘white supremacy culture’ to refer to anything in UU culture is flatly preposterous. I can understand why the term is being used, however: Its shock value is undeniable. It’s a verbal hand grenade. Nonetheless, it’s a mistake. Using the term — flinging it freely without attempting to define what you mean by it — is going to alienate a lot of sensible people. People you would like to have on your side. People like me.” (Aiken 2019)

In her 2019 paper *Is the ‘White Supremacy Culture’ Paradigm a Useful Strategy for Anti-Racist / Anti-Oppression Social Justice Work?*, retired political science professor Anne L. Schneider writes about “the dangers of progressive/liberal people and groups adopting illiberal strategies including the use of words like ‘white supremacy’ to describe liberal and progressive organizations that do not hold beliefs or practices that portray the white race as superior to other races.” She believes that such language hurts racial justice work by dividing rather than unifying would-be allies in the causes. (Schneider 2019)

I understand the need for some to have a shared group language. However, someone who communicates in this language is expressing an ideology. A religion or congregation that speaks in these terms is speaking in an ideology. Those who expect you to use their ideological language are trying to create ideological conformity.

Control of language can be a power move and a mode of indoctrination. Notice how the phrases such as “upholding white supremacy,” “you’re exhibiting fragility” and “racist” are sometimes used as weapons to bully and guilt UUs, and to shut down discussion.

In her essay, *Language as an Instrument of Totalitarianism*, Alexandra Kapelos-Peters writes, “In order to maintain its power, George Orwell claims that a political regime uses language to produce a reduced state of individual consciousness in its residents. As it structures and places limits on ideas that an individual is capable of forming, language is established as a type of mind-control for the masses. The primary purpose of political language, to Orwell, is to eliminate individual thought and expression.” (Apelos-Peters 2003)

Political theorist Saul Alinsky famously said, “He who controls the language controls the masses.”

While all should work to be conscious of others’ linguistic sensibilities and avoid using obviously universally felt offensive words, freedom of thought and beliefs requires freedom of language.

## Further Reading

Manipulation of language as a weapon of mind control and abuse of power in 1984

Paging Dr. Orwell. The American Medical Association takes on the politics of language

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## 11 Intolerance and Illiberalism

There has been much talk and concern about illiberalism and “woke intolerance” on university campuses and elsewhere. There is no question that censorship and illiberalism have long existed within the political far right. However, such qualities once associated with the far right have appeared within the extreme left.

The following are some of the more egregious examples:

University of Chicago geography professor Dorian Abbott had a major lecture canceled as he argued for meritocracy in hiring

Students Demand Skidmore College Fire an Art Professor for Observing a Pro-Cop Rally

UCLA reinstated Gordon Klein. Who will reinstate his reputation?

Professor Suspended for Exam Wording Sues U of Illinois Chicago

Professor suspended for saying a Chinese word that sounds like a racial slur in English

People try to get Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker removed from positions over old tweets

Then there are the infamous cases of Oberlin College versus Gibson’s Bakery, and the 2017 Evergreen State University controversy:

Gibson's Bakery v. Oberlin College

2017 Evergreen State College ‘Day of Absence’ Controversy

The question is if these instances of overreaction and sometimes ridiculousness are aberrations or if these are representative of a general trend.

Veronique de Rugy and Tevi Troy of George Mason University’s Mercatus Center see an increase in campus intolerance. However, others, such as Columbia University political science professor Jeffrey Adams Sachs, do not. New York University social psychology professor Jonathan Haidt sees a rise in illiberalism but sees it primarily in East Coast elite schools and in areas of the West Coast. (Troy 2021) (Sachs 2019)

Polls have shown that professors are increasingly politically left. However, professors' political persuasions are not an inherent problem when the professors and schools allow a diversity of views and debate. I studied at a famously progressive private university and in a humanities

department with a clear political and ideological slant. The professors and classes not only allowed but encouraged debate and diversity of ideas. Well argued dissent and outside-the-box thinking were rewarded. (PRI 2019)

Polls show that “intolerance is on the rise” among university students. Incoming freshmen are more willing to shut down speech they find offensive and more willing to ban extreme speakers. (HERI 2019) (Rampell 2016)

A key with public cancellations and social media mobs is that they intimidate other students and professors into silence. It creates self-censorship, groupthink and ideological echo chambers. (Schlosser 2015) (Haidt 2019) (Friederdor 2020) (Zimmerman 2021)

Many say the main problem isn't the students, but that they are enabled by administrators. Undergrads are young. The school presidents, deans and other administrators are supposed to be the adults in the room. (Handa S 2021) (Abrams 2021)

Liberalism, freedom of speech and the exchange of a diversity of ideas are essential for a university and education. They are necessary for creativity and learning. Students must learn to listen to and consider different opinions and views. This is how they expand their minds, how they become prepared for the multicultural world. Studies have shown that students who have friends with different views become more tolerant and open-minded. Communities and societies that bully people into silence and create a culture of self-censorship and superficial conformity are unhealthy and dysfunctional. Columnist Michelle Goldberg writes that “Cowing people is not the same as converting them.” (Goldberg 2021) (Higher Ed 2020)

### **“The Coddling of the American Mind” and “The Rise of Victimhood Culture”**

Everyone should become aware of racism and other bigotry including in the dominant culture and language. However, psychology professor Jonathan Haidt and lawyer and President of Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) Greg Lukianof have written that such sensitivity often moves to the extremes, leading to illiberalism, censorship and a culture of fear. They say that safe spaces, excessive ideas of microaggressions and “harm” are not only bad for education but for students' mental health. (Haidt 2018)

”The Coddling of the American Mind” by Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukinoff

”Jonathan Haidt: How Colleges are Failing Kids”

“Home of the Anxious and Fragile?” Interview with Jonathan Haidt

Similarly, sociology professors Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning write about these issues in the book *The Rise of Victimhood Culture: Microaggressions, Safe Spaces, and the New Culture Wars*.

Video: [Bradley Campbell & Jason Manning: Microaggressions, #metoo, Victimhood, and more.](#)

[Microaggressions and the Rise of Victimhood Culture](#)

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## 12 Intolerance and Illiberalism in Unitarian Universalism

As described in chapter two, Unitarian Universalism has long been one of the most liberal and tolerant churches. It has believed in individual paths and personal theological choices, freedom of expression and the democratic process. Unlike top-down religions such as Catholicism, congregations are independent and self-determining.

However, following illiberal trends in other institutions, the national UU leadership has been taken over by radicals who are trying to transform UU into an illiberal, top-town church. It controversially declared UU “a white supremacy culture.” In a church that advertises itself as having no creed, it unilaterally declared an extreme version of critical race theory as a “theological mandate” for all congregations and UUs. (UUA 2018) (Hewitt & de la Fuente 2021) (UUA 2021) (UUA 2017) (UUA 2020)

The worst excesses of “woke culture” you can think of are now found in the national UU: dogmatism, religious-like fanaticism and self-righteousness, racial essentialism, censorship, call out and cancel culture, ideological language and language policing, expectations of ideological and political conformity, public shaming and punishment of perceived heretics.

In his 2021 book *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America*, John McWhorter cited the current national UU as an exemplar of the new intolerance that can be found in the far left. Elsewhere, he writes, “Unitarianism has been all but taken over in many places by modern antiracist theology, forcing the resignation of various ministers and other figures. The new faith also manifests itself in objections to what its adherents process as dissent.” (McWhorter 2020)

One congregant who left UU wrote, “It’s heart-breaking to see a once liberal, tolerant community become a mirror image of the alt-right.”

Retired UU Minister Rev. Dr. Davidson Loehr and UU author Jim Aikin have written that UU is susceptible to falling for political dogmatism because it has no core theological belief.

Aikin writes, “This way of looking at it goes a long way to explaining why the UUA has been taken over by the toxic anti-racist cult. As I see it (this is me talking now, not McWhorter), woke anti-racism found a ready home in Unitarian-Universalism because UUism isn’t a religion at all. We have the trappings of religion — ministers, hymn-singing, passing the basket, all that good stuff. But there are no core beliefs in UUism. Prior to the merger, Unitarianism had not had any core beliefs for a hundred years. It had drifted into rational humanism, so it was fertile soil in which the bad seed could take root. The nice people running the UUA *wanted* to be a religion;

they thought they were a religion already; but something was missing from their experience of religious feeling.” (Aikin 2022) (Loehr 2005)

In a liberal church, some UU leaders have said that liberalism and Western Enlightenment values such as freedom of speech and expression, equality, individualism and the vigorous use of logic and reason are oppressive and uphold “white supremacy.” Using the most extreme neoracist and racially essentialist interpretations of CRT, they began “centering” and “decentering” and even segregating congregants based on race. Audiences and groups at the annual General Assembly are now racially segregated. (UUA NER 2019) (VUU 2018 ) (McCardle 2019) (Harper 2021)

In a church without dogma, the national UU now has a dogma. Those who dissent or have different viewpoints are considered heretics, labeled “racist” and “oppressors.”

One congregant wrote, “What drew me to UU is the freedom of thought, the sharing of ideas, the being free to differ and debate while holding each other with respect. What drew me to UU is that it eschews dogma, or at least it used to. I fear that is no longer true. If the only way we, as UUs, are allowed to think about and deal with racism and, by extension, anything else we are concerned with is by following the edicts of CRT, how is that not dogma?”

In a church traditionally of independent thinking and the free exchange of ideas, the national UU has worked to control information and censor. Under the direction of the UUA, UU World magazine removed letters to the editor and has stated it will only publish views that support the new orthodoxy. One longtime minister called UU World “an ideological propaganda organ,” and another called it “Pravda.” UU leaders and ministers under the new orthodoxy have told other ministers and congregants not to read books of which it does not approve, and ministers themselves have said they refuse to read certain books. Dissenting views have been censored and dissenters removed from public forums at the General Assembly. (Walton 2019) (Wells 2019) (5th Principle Project 2020) (Trudeau 2019) (Pine 2019) (Aiken 2019) (Cain 2019) (Aikin 2021)

Former UU World columnist Jeffrey A. Lockwood wrote, “The current direction of the UUA is divisive, accusatory, destructive, and contrary to UU principles. Censorship is fundamentally inimical to our religious traditions and values.”

In its very principles, Unitarian Universalism is premised on the right of conscience and democracy. In 2020, the Unitarian Universalist Association had a ‘UU the Vote’ campaign to promote democracy and get out the vote in the elections across the country. However, the UUA hypocritically works to dismantle the pillars of democracy and create an anti-democracy culture and theology within UU. The UUA and other national UU groups do basic anti-democratic practices that are associated with authoritarian movements and totalitarian regimes. These

practices include top-down control of information and censorship, suppression of dissent and debate, punishment and even expulsion of dissenters.

How the Unitarian Universalist Association Works to Dismantle Democracy

Ministers who speak out in dissent have been censored and censured. One was publicly shamed and excommunicated for writing a book critiquing UUA illiberalism and identity politics. Another was fired from the Good Officer program after defending him. (Davis 2020) (Devilhead 2020) (Wells 2019) (Well 2019) (Pine 2019) (Disaffected Colleagues 2020)

Rev. Cynthia Cain writes, “UUs everywhere, but particularly clergy and particularly on social media, are afraid to speak their truth. Their fear is due to their perception that not only will they be shamed, shouted down, and piled upon metaphorically, but that they may actually lose their standing with our association and consequently their livelihoods. This I know for certain.” (Cain 2019)

"Dogmatism and Fanaticism in UU" by Rev. Mark Gallagher

"Standing on the Side of Power", UU minister Rev. Munro Sickafoose

"UUs in the Pews, Please Help!" by Rev. Richard Trudeau

"Unitarian Universalist ministers flagellate themselves ..." by University Chicago evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne

"I love you . . . Now Change!" by Rev. Cynthia Cain

The two UU seminaries have become dogmatic, teaching seminary students what to think rather than how to think. A minister who graduated from one of the seminaries said he believes that “CRT is pounded into the students.” A longtime UU minister wrote, “I think the biggest danger to local congregations is the takeover of seminaries and the credentialing of clergy. Newly minted clergy are overwhelmingly indoctrinated and, if they aren’t, they will have a hard time being accepted as UU clergy.”

Following the new UUA orthodoxy, many newly ordained ministers have worked to stifle dissent in congregations. They often platform only the UUA-approved agenda, and censor, punish and even expel dissenting congregants. Congregants have been publicly called out for questioning the orthodoxy and even recommending the reading of unapproved books. A few ministers have promoted that dissenting congregants should be “re-educated” or asked to leave. One UU leader said that older liberal congregants should change their way of thinking or leave UU. (VUU 2020).

Wrote one congregant: “Many congregations are more afraid of becoming split apart than they are afraid of falling under the distortions formulated by the current UUA Junta. This fear drives many church leaders towards silencing outspoken voices. I have already been seriously, and formally, threatened.”

A newly ordained true believer minister told me that I did not belong in UU for expressing perfectly mainstream Jewish views that fall well within the parameters of the Unitarian Universalism’s Principles. When I relayed what she said to a longtime minister, he replied, “She should re-read UU’s Principles.” Two Jewish friends quit their UU congregations due to the illiberalism and new UUA orthodoxy. One said he saw antisemitism in the new UUA dogma and was scared to speak his views in UU spaces due to the intolerance of different views.

### Is the UUA’s Anti-Racism Model Antisemitic?

My mother, a longtime women’s rights activist who was instrumental in applying Title IX laws to achieve gender equity in public education in Wisconsin, quit her UU congregation and UU as a whole in 2019. She explained, “UU is no longer UU. It has become like other religions. I don’t like how the UUA tries to control what are supposed to be independent congregations, and I don’t go for dogma. UU has also become mean.”

Despite its sloganeering, the new UUA political paradigm is not about centering minorities but a particular narrow ideology.

If the UUA and new ministers wanted to center minority races, genders, the physically or mentally disabled, they wouldn’t enforce ideological conformity. Expectations of ideological, political, language and religious conformity are oppressive of minority and marginalized groups. It is also the antithesis of multiculturalism and diversity.

This all is why I think the UUA’s and UU World’s rhetoric about “Centering the voices of minority groups” is disingenuous and false. It is about centering those who agree with a particular narrow political paradigm. A longtime member at my local UU congregation, “I find it hard to tell new member candidates that ours is a non-doctrinaire faith.”

## **Division and strife**

In chapter 7 I wrote that a key criticism of dogmatic critical race theory and the ideas of Kendi and DiAngelo is that they are counterproductive to racial justice progress because they divide rather than unite people in the cause. The current UU leadership’s authoritarian, dogmatic, illiberal approach to racial justice has caused division and strife in Unitarian Universalist congregations and groups across the country. Congregations have split, longtime congregants

have quit UU or cut their pledges. There has been talk of a split in the church and the forming of an alternative to the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA).

One congregant wrote, “The passionate adherents to this framework are sowing division within UU communities and needlessly pushing away people who are natural allies in a struggle every UU supports.” Another said that due to the divisiveness, alienation and backlash it has produced amongst UUs, the national UU’s heavy-handed methods have set racial justice back in UU and many congregations. (Westside 2021)

This should have been predicted. Illiberalism and religious liberalism are by definition mutually exclusive. Trying to unilaterally impose a creed onto a non-creed church will necessarily cause strife. Even national leaders acknowledged that most UU laity are liberals not radicals. A veteran UU minister once compared trying to get congregants to agree to a single thing to “herd cats.” (VUU 2018)

That this has caused such strife and division in perhaps the country’s most left-leaning church shows how poorly such methodology will work outside of UU.

How this will all play out in Unitarian Universalism only the future will tell.

### **Recommend Books for Further Reading.**

*Used to Be UU: The Systematic Attack on UU Liberalism* by Casper & Kiskel

Publisher’s description: “Under the rubric of creating the “beloved community” Unitarian Universalist leadership seeks to move the denomination toward a more ecclesiastical rather than associational governing structure. This involves replacing the Unitarian Universalist belief system founded on the Seven Principles with something leadership calls “liberatory theology” where principled dissent will no longer be welcomed.”

*The Gadfly Affair: A 21st Century Heretic’s Excommunication from America’s Most Liberal Religion* by Todd Ekloff

Publisher’s description: “Freedom, reason, tolerance. These are the values American Unitarianism was founded upon in the late 18th century: the same Enlightenment principles that had also inspired the nation’s founders. Until recently, it was unthinkable that this liberal religion would be capable of banning books and silencing dissenters. But this is precisely what happened after Unitarian Universalist minister Todd Ekloff wrote his book, ‘The Gadfly Papers: Three Inconvenient Essays by One Pesky Minister.’”

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## 13 Conclusion

There is no one or objectively correct way to tackle issues of racial, ethnic and other oppression. Any theory or model is at best limited, imperfect, situational and involves trade-offs. There are many different possible productive ways and combinations of ways to address oppression. However, I know that authoritarianism, dogmatism and illiberalism are not among them. Authoritarianism, dogmatism and illiberalism are oppressive, including of minorities.

We all have our particular theories, personal ideologies and subjective ways of looking at the world. Philosopher Thomas Kuhn wrote, “People see the world through their theories.” The problem is when people try to force everyone to follow them. People and groups who think they’ve discovered “the one true universal truth” and “the one correct way of viewing the world” and that everyone must follow it is a story as old as humankind, politics and religion. Sadly, as it’s an innate trait in human psychology, such fanaticism is found within every new generation.

This text argues for liberalism, the open exchange of ideas, freedom of speech and expression (I’m not an absolutist, so no slippery slope arguments). It argues for the importance of listening to others’ perspectives and views.

Having and maintaining liberal, tolerant communities and institutions that support the respectful exchange of ideas is not a passive activity. Illiberalism and censorship don’t always come in the form of edicts or rules from authority. They can come via groupthink and crowd following, peer pressure and going along to get along. Self-censorship is censorship. They can come from a culture that doesn’t actively foster freedom of expression and dialogue. Thomas Sowell wrote, “Freedom is unlikely to be lost all at once and openly. It is far more likely to be eroded away, bit by bit, amid glittering promises and expressions of noble ideals.”

Learn, practice and promote critical thinking skills.