



Critical Learning

Jessica Quinn
Online Communications Specialist

In recent months, the term “Critical Race Theory” has flashed in news headlines, trended in social media, and been repeated in state legislatures across the country. So far this year, [21 states](#) have either banned Critical Race Theory from public schools or have introduced legislation to do so. All this attention begs the question: do the lawmakers proposing these bans understand what Critical Race Theory is, having likely not received this education in their own schooling? And for us who are Christians, do we grasp our role in this discussion?

“Critical Race Theory, or CRT, is a theoretical and interpretive mode that examines the appearance of race and racism across dominant cultural modes of expression” ([Purdue.edu](#)). CRT is a framework that is used to help understand why racial inequities exist in our society and how we might address them. Critical Race Theory and [The 1619 Project](#) propose we talk about the historical and present-day impacts of slavery and the contributions made by Black people throughout history.

Christians have a role in this discussion. Throughout this country’s history, Christian denominations have been active in the perpetuation and validation of slavery, racism, and the removal and genocide of Indigenous people. In his book *Stamped from the Beginning*, Ibram X. Kendi writes, “Christianity, rationality, civilization, wealth, goodness, souls, beauty, light, Adam, Jesus, God, and freedom had all been framed as the dominion of White people,” (p. 75). As Christians with a sacred call to honor the dignity and humanity of all people, might we see CRT as a way to honor the dignity and humanity of those still living with the history and present-day impact of systemic racism. And for white Christians, could we see this education as part of a journey toward repair?

When South Carolina Representative Ralph Norman said, “Critical Race Theory asserts that people with white skin are inherently racist,” it was apparent he was not familiar with the actual premise of CRT. And when, in a Pennsylvania school board meeting, a woman identifying as Christian spoke in opposition to CRT,

saying she leads with love, does not see skin color, and that she and other parents “will not yield...will not let you have the souls of our children” ([per Amna Nawaz](#)), it’s clear she was not seeking a path of truth and repair. The recent passage of Juneteenth as a federal holiday seems ironic when many of the legislators who supported it are simultaneously working to ban any teaching of the history of the day.

Critical Race Theory is a way of examining our history without ignoring the impacts of racism on this country. Banning it from curriculum represents a massive gap in education and civic responsibility. Banning honest history because we might not like what we hear is irresponsible, and limits our ability to respond effectively to the issues of today like gun violence, poverty, and violent white nationalism. There cannot be a sense of community, of congregation, of care for our neighbor if we do not move towards healing together. Let us join the God of Exodus in bringing ruin to the white supremacy that still clings in our church and in our community. Let us do so by turning toward truth, toward wholeness, and towards repair.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jessica Quinn is the Online Communications Specialist for the United Church of Christ.

LEARN ucc.org/justice

DONATE ucc.org/donate

ARCHIVE



bit.ly/witness4justice

The United Church of Christ has more than 5,000 churches throughout the United States. Rooted in the Christian traditions of congregational governance and covenantal relationships, each UCC setting speaks only for itself and not on behalf of every UCC congregation. UCC members and churches are free to differ on important social issues, even as the UCC remains principally committed to unity in the midst of our diversity.