

Guide

Critical Race Theory in Corporate America: What It Is and Why It's Important

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SERAMOUNT
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Introduction

The debate over teaching Critical Race Theory (CRT) in public schools has been [in the news this summer](#) and has caused many, especially parents, to consider the impact of the U.S. public education system. Those arguing for teaching CRT include the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., the National Urban League, and the National Fair Housing Alliance.

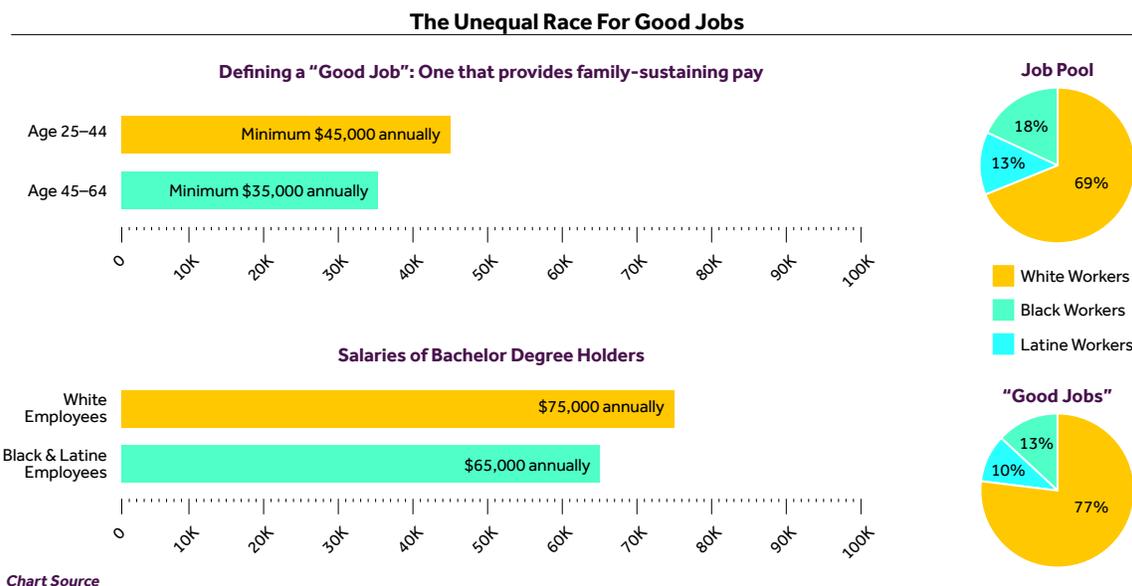
Those fighting against CRT implementation in public schools include No Left Turn in Education, International Organization for the Family, and prominent Republican politicians, including [Florida Governor Ron DeSantis](#) and former advisor to President Trump's administration [Steve Bannon](#). Pushback against the implementation of CRT stems from uncertainty that children should be exposed to racial dialogue—with some citing the information as divisive.

Many people are asking how CRT will impact their children, their workplaces, and their daily social spheres. Corporate leaders, especially chief diversity officers (CDOs), may hear of concerns by employees, especially those who are parents. Employees also may begin to worry about the impact CRT may have on office culture.

So what is CRT? CRT is a discipline that began in the 1970s to assess potential racial inequities in laws. It was born from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the Civil Rights Act by a group of scholars, including Derrick Bell (the father of CRT), Kimberlé Crenshaw (who is noted for coining the term), and Richard Delgado.

From CRT, many well-known principles were established, such as intersectionality, unconscious bias, microaggressions, and anti-racism. While CRT began as a system to break down legal barriers based on race, it has broadened to build more inclusive systems that impact all historically underrepresented groups in the United States. **It does this by stating that everyone feeds into historically established oppressive structures, be it intentional or not, because of well-established societal norms.**

As an example connected to the workplace, **hiring discrimination, while illegal, still exists.** In a [longitudinal study running from 1991 to 2016](#), Georgetown University found that Black and Latine Americans were less likely to obtain "good jobs" than White applicants, even when education and prior work experience was controlled.



A “good job” in this study was defined as one that provided family-sustaining pay, which was a minimum of \$35,000 annually for workers 25 to 44, and \$45,000 for those 45–64.

Further, the study also pointed to large pay gaps, with bachelor’s-degree holding White employees earning \$75,000 per year compared to bachelor’s-degree holding Black and Latine workers earning \$65,000. In 2016, White workers held 77 percent of the good jobs, while constituting only 69 percent of the available job pool. Black workers had 10 percent of their 13 percent share of the pool. Latine workers had 13 percent of good jobs out of their 18 percent of the job pool.

Companies’ DE&I efforts through anti-discrimination training or policies, advocacy and allyship, and being proactively focused on equity are examples based in CRT principles. After the death of George Floyd, many corporations made pledges to create more diverse workplaces with more inclusive environments. These are detailed in our groundbreaking research report [From Pledge to Progress: Corporate America One Year After George Floyd’s Death](#), where Seramount studies corporate employee reactions to the pledges and offers expert solutions to address systemic racism.

Solutions like these reflect the purpose of CRT– to educate people on inequities built into everyday structures (e.g. disproportionately low rates of people of color in leadership positions), to determine best practices to address these issues (e.g. surveying employees of color to find internal pain points), and to create a model with actionable and timed goals to mitigate those inequities (e.g. improve hiring pipelines from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions).

In this guide, Seramount will outline the following:

- How to use a neutral and educational lens while discussing CRT and related ideologies in the workplace
- How companies’ DE&I efforts are already connected to the theories of CRT
- What leadership, especially chief diversity officers, can do to build awareness, education and drive inclusive behaviors through CRT learning and growth
- How companies can drive their ESG efforts by understanding CRR, a corporate focused theory based on CRT

REMAINING NEUTRAL WITH CRITICAL RACE THEORY

As DE&I champions, we often have the inclination to educate and promote understanding of issues. In some cases of controversy, it’s important to remain neutral and be open to hearing different perspectives before weighing in. In order to keep workplace discussions objective, it’s important to clearly outline what CRT is in a neutral manner, and be prepared to engage with employees and leaders on the topic by creating safe spaces to discuss, explore, and understand CRT and affiliating ideologies.

[The American Bar Association](#) provides excellent guidance on how to explain that race and racism are a social construct rather than an innate biological one. They note that Kimberlé Crenshaw uses the term CRT as a verb, rather than a noun, as it is a fluid concept that is always evolving– this ever-changing mantra of the theory allows it to mold to social movements and theories more readily, changing as society changes. CRT recognizes that racism and race are intersectional ideas with other identities, including gender, sexuality, religion, and wealth.

The main principles of the theory include:

- Recognition that race is not biologically race, but socially constructed and significant. Science has proven, based on results from the [Human Genome Project](#), that race is because of biological differences.

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- Acknowledgement that racism is a feature of society, embedded within systems and institutions much like the legal system.
- Rejection of popular arguments about racism, such as some people are just “bad apples” as racism is codified in law and public policy.
- Rejection of biased language, such as color-blindness, as these words perpetuate racial inequality.
- Recognition of the lived experiences of people of color (POC) as relevant to the scholarship of the theory.

HOW TO ADDRESS THE RESISTANCE TO ADDRESSING CRT

In a recent Seramount report, [From Pledge to Progress: Corporate America One Year After George Floyd’s Death](#), 79 percent of corporate executives who support their organizations’ efforts to fight racism said they think DE&I efforts have been overblown. Add in a workplace discussion of CRT and leaders may face resistance and backlash from some employees. Here are some steps and resources leaders can use to redirect the conversation to the importance of understanding CRT in the workplace:

- **Remain neutral:** Keep messaging centered on education and clarity rather than approving or disapproving of CRT’s integration into social structures. Do this by framing conversations around learning opportunities.
- **Create safe and brave spaces:** Create an encouraging environment for people to discuss their joys, concerns, hopes, and fears about CRT in schools and in the workspace. Allow all voices to be heard, but be sure to keep it friendly banter by not allowing anyone to say anything derogatory.
- **Cite the business case:** If applicable, use language found in company policy—be it an anti-racism statement, goals, or a portion of the employee handbook. If it discusses equality, accepting one another because of differences, or the importance of learning from different cultures it is beneficial to tie a CRT conversation to the business plan for the company to demonstrate relevance.
- **Define the issue:** Be clear about what is happening in society that could be impacting employees. Give examples of leadership hopes or concerns on the issue of CRT. Explain why the conversation is important and what leadership hopes to accomplish from holding open conversations on CRT.

Resources to share with your ERGs for more personalized conversations:

- Chalkboard Review: [Critical Race Theory Toolkit](#)
- Class Central: [Anti-Racism I \(Free Online Course\)](#)
- Portland Community College: [Take 5: Critical Race Theory Toolkit](#)
- Whites for Racial Equity: [Stop Racism](#)
- Purdue University: [Critical Race Theory \(1970s-Present\)](#)

CRT states that racism is inherently embedded in the social web of American society. Our systems and institutions have been constructed to advantage one group over another based upon race. However, those who have benefited most from these systems do not have many incentives to change the structure, and many do not even notice the advantages the system has set in place for them.

For example, what makes Asian foods in the grocery store “ethnic,” while dried spaghetti is simply labeled “pasta” rather than “ethnic/Italian”? Labels like these create a sense of “othering” in everyday life. With increased awareness around these types of issues, cultural changes are occurring to create a more inclusive

environment. CRT has led to the creation of several principles that employers may recognize as corporate social responsibility, intersectionality, unconscious bias, and anti-racism.

BEING BOLD WITH CRITICAL RACE THEORY

CRT recently became the basis for a new critical theory, called the **Corporate Responsibility to Race Theory** (CRR). This idea redirects CRT from federal and state laws, as well as general social interactions, to the historically oppressive nature found in corporate settings that have perpetuated and profited from racial oppression. As race and racism are **connected to power**, it is essential that leadership in these settings take on a large portion of the work that needs to be done in the workplace.

CRR was created based on the intersectionality of roles of the corporation, race, and corporate social responsibility. CRR highlights the increasing trend of companies taking external stances on social justice issues from a perspective of “this is the right thing to do,” rather than “this is the right thing for profits.”

With the understanding of CRT and CRR, companies can begin to explain how both have influenced DE&I work, making the idea of CRT in the workplace less sudden and disruptive. For example, terms such as intersectionality, microaggressions, anti-racism, and White fragility all come from the ideations of derived knowledge from CRT’s accomplishments. Reinforcing the idea that most employees have already interacted with CRT will allow for a less defensive conversation.

How are companies integrating CRT in the DE&I strategies?

- Many companies made pledges to anti-racism and diversity measures within the last year and a half, largely after the murder of George Floyd. This speaks to the impact of corporate social responsibility that stems from systems created by CRT.
- Companies that connect their mission, vision, and/or values to DE&I and the importance of belonging are working from CRT and CRR.
- Any company that has been explicitly intentional about improving racial/ethnic demographics, especially in leadership.
- Incorporating onboarding trainings that center around DE&I concepts, such as understanding unconscious bias, how to be culturally competent, how to be an upstander, and inclusive leadership trainings to support difficult conversations.
- Establishing employee resource groups (ERGs) and business resource groups (BRGs) to aid the company’s goals in benchmarking DE&I goals, align these goals to the overall strategy of the company, and allow space for employees to connect based on identity signifiers.
- Promoting soft-skill building, such as empathy and maintaining psychological safety, to create a more inclusive and aware workforce.

The tenants of CRR include:

- Corporations have an inherent responsibility to support and lead racial-justice initiatives by forming structures, internal and external, that improve race relations.
- Aided by the establishment of racism, racialization, and oppressive measures, corporations have been able to prosper and thrive.
- Perpetuation of racial strife and social unrest stem from the direct and indirect benefits corporations have from racial discrimination and oppression.

LEADERSHIP’S RESPONSIBILITY TO GUIDING THE CONVERSATION

With a clearer picture of these theories in hand, what can leadership do to promote DE&I strategy while being more mindful of the CRT or CRR lens? **Seramount suggests the following:**

- Create intentionality around all DE&I initiatives by forming clear dialogue around why and how events are trying to address and their impact.

- Engage with and listen to employees to get insights and understand how well initiatives are impacting teams, and continue to audit and assess who is missing or, even more importantly, not benefiting. **Employee Voice Sessions** from Seramount are a great tool to utilize for this purpose.
- Be sure members of the C-Suite team sponsor ERGs and BRGs. It is important for these leaders to understand the knowledge these groups provide about internal relations and needs of different groups of employees.
- Review policies for problematic language and exclusionary actions. Audit systems for equity and fairness. If any changes are made, be sure to clearly explain why the company is changing the policy/system and the inclusivity goal of the shift.
- Discuss leadership's personal stories and journeys on their way to becoming more intentionally inclusive leaders. This allows more human-centered and empathetic dialogue to occur and build trust.

EXECUTIVE STORYTELLING SESSIONS

Seramount offers coaching sessions for executives who wish to build their own personal diversity stories (upbringing, education, appearance, image, experience as an outsider) which can be shared again in many different forums (external events, media, town halls, website biographies, and recruitment campaigns).

Creating an impactful personal story can contribute to an executive's legacy of diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging. Seramount's DE&I professional coaches and practitioners will work directly with executives in an introductory call, followed by a storytelling interview session, culminating in storytelling creation in collaboration with the company's communication team. Executives can schedule quarterly check-ins with our coaches to practice, pose questions, and explore ways of sharing their stories authentically.

CDOs and diversity directors have a unique position and are expected to be proactive and thoughtful regarding DE&I topics. They must be able to articulate in verbal and written form the importance of DE&I initiatives to all levels of the company, they must understand the various levels of culture in the organization to be able to appropriately respond, and they must know the various programs either being developed or in effect in order to ensure proper positioning of DE&I tasks. When it comes to the current conversation around CRT, CDOs and champions may find their organizations resisting efforts or pushing back with "this doesn't belong in the workplace, it's too divisive."

How should CDOs tackle the positionality of work and CRT while being mindful of concerns from employees? **Seramount has these recommendations:**

- Offer open office hours or coffee chats for employees to join and ask questions and gather resources on CRT and topics related.
- Co-host an event with an ERG or BRG focusing on CRT in the workplace and the impact it has on workplace culture and company goals.
- Host employee voice sessions or send out a survey on the impact of CRT in employee's personal and professional lives.
- Share and shape messaging for ERG leaders or diversity council leads.

CRT is already foundational to the work that we, as DE&I champions, do. We have an opportunity to be more intentional about CRT and CRR. No matter what you call it—justice, belonging, anti-racism—this requires commitment, accountability, openness, organizational self-reflection (take a real look, hold up our mirror), and also requires us to address the perspective of the 79 percent of corporate executives that feel DE&I is overblown.

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Leaders that utilize the recommendations in this paper can start their companies on a powerful path to understanding what CRT is and how people may have already gotten used to working with its tenants and the ideologies that were formed because of the theory.

RESOURCES AS OF AUGUST 2021

Seramount Offerings

- **Executive Storytelling:** Seramount offers coaching sessions for executives who wish to build their own personal diversity stories (upbringing, education, appearance, image, experience as an outsider), which can be shared again in many different forums (external events, media, town halls, website biographies, and recruitment campaigns).
- **Building Antiracist Behaviors:** In this webinar, Seramount will provide definitions of racism and antiracism, historical context on discrimination and inequality, and information on understanding the types of racism. Participants will leave the session with tools and strategies for becoming an antiracist and how to seek out opportunities to create institutional and cultural change.
- **Having Essential Conversations:** Seramount offers a webinar workshop designed to raise awareness of the biases, injustices, and inequities that exist systemically, and to provide actionable steps employees can take toward championing diversity, equity, and inclusion for a more equitable outcome. This session will give participants the tools needed to recognize personal challenges in talking about racism. The step-by-step guide will identify and explore goals around creating safe spaces for people, ultimately paving the way for future conversations.
- **Employee Voice Sessions:** Seramount leverages its proprietary employee voice session capabilities as a strategic tool to help companies listen to the voices of their employees and translate insights into efficient and focused road maps for improving the employee experience.
- **Initiating Antiracist Conversations with Family and Friends:** In this webinar, Seramount will provide tools to begin important conversations in our community to better understand how individuals and institutions contribute to discriminatory practices against Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and to find ways in which each of us could be “disruptors” to entrenched belief systems in order to be a true ally to those who are affected by everyday forms of racist attitudes and actions.
- **Seramount Speaker: [Bridgette Scales](#)** is a senior director of DBP member advisory services at Seramount. She is experienced in sales and HR and became a Diversity & Inclusion subject-matter expert during her long tenure at Procter & Gamble. She has a history of developing and implementing strategies, programs and processes across a complex and matrix organization. As a D&I practice leader for North America, Bridgette guided and counseled senior leaders on the integration of strategies that included awareness, cultural competency, leadership development, accountability and employee engagement.

Books

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BOOKS BY CRITICAL RACE THEORISTS

[Critical Race Theory: An Introduction](#) by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic

Critical Race Theory is essential for understanding developments in this burgeoning field, which has spread to other disciplines and countries. The new edition also covers the ways in which other societies and disciplines adapt its teachings and, for readers wanting to advance a progressive race agenda, includes new questions for discussion, aimed at outlining practical steps to achieve this objective.

Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement by Kimberlé Crenshaw

Edited by its principal founders and leading theoreticians, *Critical Race Theory* was the first book to gather the movement's most important essays. This groundbreaking book includes contributions from scholars including Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Williams, Dorothy Roberts, Lani Guinier, Duncan Kennedy, and many others. It is essential reading in an age of acute racial injustice.

Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism by Derrick Bell

In *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, civil rights activist and legal scholar Bell uses allegory and historical examples to argue that racism is an integral and permanent part of American society. African American struggles for equality are doomed to fail so long as the majority of Whites do not see their own well-being threatened by the status quo. Bell calls on African Americans to face up to this unhappy truth and abandon a misplaced faith in inevitable progress. Only then will Blacks, and those Whites who join with them, be in a position to create viable strategies to alleviate the burdens of racism.

From Class to Race by Charles W. Mills

In *From Class to Race*, Mills maps the theoretical route that brought him to the innovative conceptual framework outlined in his academic bestseller *The Racial Contract* (1997). Mills argues for a new critical theory that develops the insights of the black radical political tradition. While challenging conventional interpretations of key Marxist concepts and claims, the author contends that Marxism has been 'white' insofar as it has failed to recognize the centrality of race and white supremacy to the making of the modern world.

How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi

In *How to Be an Antiracist*, Kendi takes readers through a widening circle of antiracist ideas—from the most basic concepts to visionary possibilities—that will help readers see all forms of racism clearly, understand their poisonous consequences, and work to oppose them in our systems and in ourselves. Kendi weaves an electrifying combination of ethics, history, law, and science with his own personal story of awakening to antiracism. This is an essential work for anyone who wants to go beyond the awareness of racism to the next step: contributing to the formation of a just and equitable society.

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander

The New Jim Crow is a stunning account of the rebirth of a caste-like system in the United States, one that has resulted in millions of African Americans locked behind bars and then relegated to a permanent second-class status—denied the very rights supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement.

Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America by Ibram X. Kendi

In this deeply researched and fast-moving narrative, Kendi chronicles the entire story of anti-black racist ideas and their staggering power over the course of American history. He uses the life stories of five major American intellectuals to drive this history: Puritan minister Cotton Mather, Thomas Jefferson, abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, W.E.B. Du Bois, and legendary activist Angela Davis. As Kendi shows, racist ideas did not arise from ignorance or hatred. They were created to justify and rationalize deeply entrenched discriminatory policies and the nation's racial inequities.

Women, Race, & Class by Angela Davis

A powerful study of the women's liberation movement in the U.S., from abolitionist days to the present, that demonstrates how it has always been hampered by the racist and classist biases of its leaders.

BOOKS INFLUENCED BY CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Being White, Being Good: White Complicity, White Moral Responsibility, and Social Justice Pedagogy by Barbara Applebaum

Being White, Being Good seeks to explain what scholars mean by White complicity, to explore the ethical and epistemological assumptions that white complicity entails, and to offer recommendations for how white complicity can be taught. The book highlights how well-intentioned White people who might even

consider themselves as paragons of antiracism might be unwittingly sustaining an unjust system that they say they want to dismantle. What could it mean for White people 'to be good' when they can reproduce and maintain racist system even when, and especially when, they believe themselves to be good? In order to answer this question, Barbara Applebaum advocates a shift in our understanding of the subject, of language, and of moral responsibility.

Black Americans by Alphonso Pinkney

This comprehensive and contemporary book presents a brief yet complete assessment of the lives of African Americans in the United States. It covers many areas, including anthropology, history, economics, political science and other pertinent areas relevant to what might be called "the Black Experience in America". Sections in this reader-friendly book include homelessness, homicide as a public health problem, the prevalence of police brutality, and capital punishment. For anyone interested in learning more about race relations, Black studies, Black history, and Black culture.

Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present by Harriet Washington

The product of years of prodigious research into medical journals and experimental reports long undisturbed, *Medical Apartheid* reveals the hidden underbelly of scientific research and makes possible, for the first time, an understanding of the roots of the African American health deficit. At last, it provides the fullest possible context for comprehending the behavioral fallout that has caused Black Americans to view researchers—and indeed the whole medical establishment—with such deep distrust.

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Olou

In *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Ijeoma Olou guides readers of all races through subjects ranging from intersectionality and affirmative action to "model minorities" in an attempt to make the seemingly impossible possible: honest conversations about race and racism, and how they infect almost every aspect of American life.

White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide by Carol Anderson

Anderson pulls back the veil that has long covered actions made in the name of protecting democracy, fiscal responsibility, or protection against fraud, rendering visible the long lineage of white rage. Compelling and dramatic in the unimpeachable history it relates, *White Rage* will add an important new dimension to the national conversation about race in America.

Videos

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Emtrain: **Examples of Workplace Microaggressions**

Shows examples of racial and ageist microaggressions.

MSNBC: **Creator of the Term 'Critical Race Theory' Kimberlé Crenshaw Explains What it Really is**

'Critical Race Theory' is explained as neither Marxist nor racist by its leading scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw, who co-developed this framework of study, and coined this term.

National Association of Independent Schools: **What is Intersectionality?**

Kimberlé Crenshaw, a 2017 NAIS People of Color Conference speaker, civil rights advocate, and professor at UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School, talks about intersectional theory, the study of how overlapping or intersecting social identities—and particularly minority

PBS Newshour: **What is Critical Race Theory?**

According to University of California, Berkeley sociology professor Prudence Carter, critical race theory is a legal framework designed by scholars in the 1980s that explains how structural and racial disparities persist in American society. Carter made the distinction between teaching critical race theory – a concept most

often introduced to students at the graduate level – and taking a critical approach to teaching about race and racism in American history.

Talks at Google: [The Heartbeat of Anti-racism](#)

In this episode of Equity Talks, Sherice Torres, Google's Global Director of Inclusion, sits down with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi to discuss what it means to be an anti-racist. The Equity Talks series is a global forum offering an in-depth study of justice through forthright discussion. By amplifying some of the most important voices of our time, our goal is to encourage introspection, conversation, and personal growth.

TEDx Talks: [Eliminating Microaggressions: The Next Level of Inclusion](#)

Microaggression is a term used for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group. In this Talk, Tiffany Alvoid—an attorney and national speaker—lays out how this behavior manifests itself, the role you play, and what you can do to avoid perpetuating its continued existence in society.

The Daily Show: [The Way Over Teaching America's Racist History in Schools](#)

Most students in America are only taught about a handful of important Black Americans in history class. Here's a look at why schools should teach students about race and why certain parents are opposed to that shift.

Tools for a Toolkit

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- The Aspen Institute: [Glossary for Understanding the Dismantling Structural Racism/Promoting Racial Equity Analysis](#)
- Chris Crass: [Towards the "Other America": Anti-Racist Resources for White People Taking Action for Black Lives Matter](#)
- JSTOR: [Institutionalized Racism: A Syllabus](#)
- Portland Community College: [Critical Race Theory \(CRT\) Decision Making Toolkit](#)
- Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research: [Reflective Intersectionality Exercise](#)

Speakers and Conversation Leaders

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[Aiko Bethea](#)

Bethea is the founder of RARE Coaching & Consulting, which focuses on supporting under-represented groups who seek to challenge homogeneity and tradition. Her consultancy services aim to help companies to develop strategies which promote diversity, inclusion, and equality in the workplace. Moreover, Aiko specializes in working closely with leaders to build teams which are truly inclusive.

[Ritu Bhasin](#)

Leadership and Inclusion consultant Bhasin champions authenticity as a key indicator of success and happiness in the workplace. Productivity, engagement, and satisfaction are all strengthened when people feel empowered to be their authentic selves at work, Bhasin argues, and her talks focus on giving leaders the tools, skills, and language they need to build inclusive environments.

[Denise Branch](#)

If you're looking for an anti-racism consultant to create a working environment that promotes anti-racist culture and racial equity, Branch is the consultant for you. Working closely with organizations and companies of all sizes, Branch aims to help employers develop anti-racist employees through strategic coaching and training strategies that help their organizations grow racism-free cultures.

Rachel Cargle

Cargle delivers workshops where she provides tools and resources for attendees to use moving forward. She has been featured in a number of publications including The Washington Post, TEDx, The New Yorker, and Harpers Bazaar. Her success stems from her ability to guide conversations which allow all parties involved to discuss issues of race in a meaningful and engaging manner.

Isla Govan

Govan has more than 15 years of experience as a facilitator, consultant, writer and social justice activist. She has led conversations about racial equity at workshops and conferences across the country and helps coordinate the White caucus at the annual national White Privilege Conference. Prior to Cultures Connecting, Isla worked as an equity and race specialist for Seattle Public Schools where she was tasked with addressing institutional racism in a large organization.

Caprice Hollins

Dr. Hollins' experience includes opening and Directing the Department of Equity & Race Relations for Seattle Public Schools. Dr. Hollins spent 20 years at the Seattle School of Theology & Psychology where she was an affiliate professor in the Counseling Department.

Ibram X. Kendi

Kendi has become a highly sought-after public speaker, delivering hundreds of talks over the years to colleges and universities as well as at festivals, conferences, churches, bookstores, and libraries, both in the United States and overseas. A talented, inspirational and motivational speaker, Ibram strives to promote anti-racism practices and attitudes in the hope of creating a more equal and fair society for all.

Ijeoma Oluo

Oluo focuses primarily on issues of race and identity. In addition, Ijeoma also explores the topics of feminism, social and mental health, social justice, and the arts within her work. Her personal essay writing offers insightful and thought-provoking perspectives on these important and timely issues.

Minette Norman

Drawing on 30 years of experience in the male-dominated world of software engineering, Autodesk's Norman speaks about the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workforce. While the corporate world may be able to recruit diverse talent, she explains, they struggle to retain them by not focusing enough on inclusion and belonging. Her diversity and inclusion keynotes show that success, vibrancy, and innovation depend on workplaces that whole-heartedly embrace difference.

Theresa M. Robinson

Robinson is a highly experienced coach, workshop facilitator, speaker, and author of three books. She has worked for over 15 years with a range of companies and organizations in 23 countries, offering workshops and coaching leaders in an effort to create a working environment which is diverse, equitable, and inclusive for all.

Dr. Nikki Taylor

Dr. Taylor, Professor of History and Chair of the Department at Howard University, specializes in 19th century African American history. Her sub-specialties are in urban, African American women, and intellectual history. She has written three books on topics such as slavery, resistance, and Black socialism, with a fourth soon to come. She offers guidance and training on many related topics, including Critical Race Theory.