



## Teaching Race and Racism

On March 24, 2022, Vice President Jabbar R. Bennett, Ph.D. hosted a conversation with Professor Dorinda Carter Andrews, the nationally recognized racial justice and educational equity scholar in the Department of Teacher Education at the College of Education, as part of the [Institutional Diversity and Inclusion Speaker Series](#). The webinar, "A Way Forward in Practice: The Myth and Misconceptions about Teaching Race and Racism," presented an opportunity for teachers to learn about considerations of race and racism in education and learning outcomes.



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The webinar covered the trajectory of why teaching race and racism is important to address in the United States education system, especially regarding the rising racial tensions facing Generation Z, our most diverse generation of incoming students. Some of the learnings of the event are summarized in this resource guide.

### Tenants of critical race theory

1. Race is a social construct; it is not biological.
2. Racism is a persistent part of the fabric of the American life (legal, housing, health, education, etc.).
3. Voices and experience of people of color should be a permanent part of the historical and contemporary American life and should inform institutional decision-making and policy development.
4. Helps us understand that people of color and their experiences are racialized and experienced differently, giving rise to teaching topics of anti-racism in education.
5. Any project committed to equity and social justice must center the ways that disparities and injustice shape the experiences of communities of color.

## Myth and misconceptions

Myth	Truth
Racism is declining	Hate crimes have been on the rise.
Teaching about race and racism is taking a political stance.	Critical race theory helps us understand how discrimination continues to exist in institutions and structures.
Teaching about race perpetuates the idea that one race is superior to others.	Teaching about race breaks down notions of racial hierarchy.
An individual by virtue of their race is inherently privileged and is born racist.	Racism is learned as a function of living in a society of racial hierarchy.
Moral character is defined by race.	Critical race theory does not define moral character by race.
An individual by virtue of their race is responsible for the actions of a group.	Individuals learn to identify privilege and forms of oppression.
Critical theories should cause guilt, discomfort, anguish and shame.	Feelings are manifested from experiences of privilege and disadvantage.

### *What should college teachers and leaders do to be prepared to teach in the classroom?*

We must continue to ensure that our governing bodies and leaders reaffirm academic freedom. Faculty should call on the governing and decision-making bodies of the university to know their legal rights. Consider developing communities of practice within your department or college, where people can think through commitments and various aspects of the curriculum. What does it look like to center racial equity and justice in students' classroom and field experiences? Really understand the disciplinary research-based practice around racial equity and the importance of drawing from peoples' lived experiences.

## Tips for teaching in the classroom

1. It is common for faculty and instructors being challenged by a myth. Be evidence based when being baited by an article or artifact; ask for a real life example.
2. If you can't think of a response, it is important to come back to it later with a follow up.
3. It is more common for faculty and instructors of color being baited; consider creating a space to support and center the experiences of diverse scholars.
4. In the U.S. we are often focused on a Black and white binary, and rightfully so, as we often think about chattel slavery and it often roots and frames conversations. Consider a global perspective to talk about additional forms of racism, including anti-Indigeneity, anti-Asianness, anti-Latinxness, etc. to help build collective solidarity against racial injustice.
5. Know the history. The term critical race theory stems from critical legal studies in the 1970s. Legal scholars of color and white allies noticed that considerations of race were silenced in legal studies, so then there was the development and centering of race in the law. Critical race theory was introduced into the field of education in 1995.

6. The history of race in America has long been told without giving an accurate account from the perspectives of people of color. Critical race theory rose as a need to establish a framework to teach the history of America from the perspective of people of color impacted by institutional racism (e.g., enslaved peoples; Indigenous peoples).
7. Events over the last 10 years have made race dialogue much more partisan. Talking about equity and justice has become a “liberal” thing. Why do we attach people’s commitments to justice to political parties? This is a political strategy and parents are calling the university now. People have also become more aware and there are more allies; people want to learn about racism, discrimination and oppression.
8. There are many disciplines where the race dialogue is off the table. Find your people, who are your critical friends, find some people to learn with. Write a proposal to start a learning community to make a space to be in dialogue with others. It may require making critical friends external to your home institution. If you know any publications that are in your field and committed to anti-racism, use those as your vehicle.
9. Teaching race and racism is dynamic. It is not static work. Be committed to continuing to do introspective work and the work with others. It is not a sprint. It is a marathon. Step back when you need to. Don’t be ashamed to engage in self-care. It’s okay to mess up and stumbling is part of this work. The way culture and racism manifest itself intersectionally requires being able to reconcile with yourself.