

Discussion & Review Questions

1. Towards the beginning of the video, Ms. Simonian contends that, “Colleges have become Leftist indoctrination centers. It’s not a new problem. It’s been going on for decades- first behind the scenes and now out front. That’s how radical change happens. It creeps up on us. And when we finally figure out what’s going on, it’s too late.” How and why do you think that colleges have become ‘Leftist indoctrination centers? What does ‘out front’ mean, and what does the fact that the Left is so ‘out front’ about their indoctrination now indicate? What exactly do you think Ms. Simonian means by the phrase ‘too late?’
2. After explaining that the phrase ‘Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion’ is actually a euphemism for Critical Race Theory, Ms. Simonian explains that, “Critical Race Theory says that racism is woven into the very fabric of American society. What does this look like in a school setting? Middle and high school students in Wellesley, Massachusetts are taught to be on the lookout for ‘unconscious’ racial bias in their classmates. ‘We need your help!’ an email to students reads. ‘Your school leaders will be working with you this year on how to be proactive about preventing bias incidents, and how to report them should they occur.’” Do you think that formal school settings are the right place for Leftists to engage in full out activism, especially without balance from the other side? What could be dangerous about engaging in Critical Race Theory activism on campuses? Explain.
3. Ms. Simonian goes on to point out that, “ ... many of our schools are teaching children that our past is terrible and that they have no future. That, if they are white, they are racist whether they know it or not. If they’re black, they’re victims, whether they experience it or not. That they should constantly question their sexual identity. With all this being drummed into their heads, no wonder today’s kids have more psychological problems than any previous generation.” Do you think that imposing the Leftist political agenda on students in school is a contributing factor to the rise in student mental health issues? Why or why not?
4. Towards the end of the video, Ms. Simonian implores parents to, “ ... find out what is being taught in your kids’ school. Take a good, hard look at curricula. Ask administrators if they endorse The 1619 Project. Are they pushing a ‘Diversity, Equity and Inclusion’ agenda? If so, demand to see what materials the school is using. At a minimum get to know your kids’ teachers and principals. Join the PTA, attend local school board meetings, look for allies among reasonable, like-minded parents. You don’t have to agree with each other on everything. You just have to agree that the brainwashing of our children stops here. Stops now.” Do you think that most parents are aware of just how much Leftist political agenda and social warrior nonsense is being taught to their children and to children in schools all over the United States? Why or why not? Do you think that parents have any real power to stop any of the brainwashing? Why or why not?
5. At the end of the video, Ms. Simonian concludes that, “Americans know what our children should be learning: That they must take responsibility for their conduct. That race is the least important aspect of another person. That hard work and rational thought are things we all value. That there is nothing wrong with the bodies they were born into. And that America was founded not to promote racism, but to guarantee sacred liberties and opportunities to its citizens. And it wouldn’t hurt if they learned reading and writing and math, too.” Do you agree that the items listed in this passage are the things that American children should be learning? Why or why not? Do you think that a certain percentage of curriculum, resources,

and formal teaching in schools should be devoted to social issues such as gender identity and racism, or do you think that formal schooling should stick strictly to academic subjects? Explain.

Extend the Learning:

Case Study Critical Race Theory

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the transcribed article “How Critical Race Theory is Dividing America,” then answer the questions that follow.

1. Why did President Trump end racial sensitivity training in the government? What happened at Sandia National Nuclear Laboratories? What is Critical Race Theory, and what do Critical Race Theorists argue? How does CRT relate to the Marxist model of ‘the oppressed and the oppressor?’ According to Critical Race Theorists, what are American institutions designed to do, what has happened to oppression, and how do they characterize racism and white supremacy? What did Mr. Rufo’s investigative reporting show? CRT has migrated from academia to where? What has become the default operating ideology of the federal government? How large, in dollar amounts, does Mr. Rufo think that the ‘diversity, equity, and inclusion’ (AKA Critical Race Theory) industry is? Who is Howard Ross and how much has he billed the taxpayers of America for his ‘trainings?’ What do the taxpayer-funded trainers do when they are brought in to the government agencies? How much science backs up the supposed success of these ‘trainings?’ Why are the ‘woke’ corporations falling all over themselves? What are public schools teaching students as young as second and third grade? Mr. Rufo’s friend stated that political indoctrination in Seattle is worse than it was in the Soviet Union because of what critical difference? Mr. Rufo says in the interview that essentially half of the country has been shut out of doing what? Why does Mr. Rufo believe that there should be an ‘intelligent and viable and responsible opposition’ to any political ideology? Mr. Rufo is committed to working with lawyers and legal foundations to protect people from what?
2. In the article, Mr. Rufo mentions “progressive activists that really have a stranglehold on culture and power in the large cities.” How do you think that the Progressive activists did this, and how is this situation bad for those cities... especially their schools? Explain. Mr. Rufo also states that parents “... need to start getting activated, mobilized and pushing back against this ideology that is being foisted upon their children.” What might the long-term consequences be if parents now don’t fight back? Explain.
3. What is the presenter’s main point in the video? Do you think that it is ‘too late’ for American schools? Why or why not?

How Critical Race Theory is Dividing America

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COMMENTARY BY

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Woman holds up sign at protest that says "White Privilege is Racism." Photo by Karla Ann Cote/NurPhoto via Getty Images

***How woke is your workplace?** This week, on the “Heritage Explains” podcast, Christopher Rufo, a Heritage Foundation visiting fellow, explains what critical race theory is and how it’s dividing America.*

Michelle Cordero: From the Heritage Foundation I'm Michelle Cordero and this is Heritage Explains.

Chris Wallace: This month your administration directed federal agencies to end racial sensitivity training that addresses white privilege or critical race theory. Why did you decide to do that, to end racial sensitivity training? And do you believe that there is systemic racism in this country sir?

Donald Trump: I ended it because it's racist. I ended it because a lot of people were

complaining that they were asked to do things that were absolutely insane, that it was a radical revolution that was taking place in our military, in our schools, all over the place and you know it and so does everybody else ...

Chris Wallace: What is radical about racial sensitivity trainings?

Cordero: President Trump and Fox News' Chris Wallace are talking about critical race theory. The topic came up briefly in the first presidential debate but what is critical race theory? It's such an academic term. Wallace called it racial sensitivity training which is easier to digest but is that what it really is? Does this sound like a fruitful exercise in equality? Here's what happened at Sandia National Laboratories which designs America's nuclear weapons.

Christopher Rufo: In one case at the Sandia National Nuclear Laboratories they held a segregated training session, a segregated reeducation camp for white male executives, where they took them away for a weekend and they were teaching them how to deconstruct their white male culture, how to accept their complicity in white supremacy, and then force them to write letters including some letters of apology to women and people of color all under this idea of denouncing their own whiteness and doing better to join this critical race theory, honestly an indoctrination cult.

Cordero: That's Christopher Rufo, a visiting fellow for Heritage's domestic policy studies and our guest today. The concept of these taxpayer funded critical race theory trainings entered the mainstream conversation after Rufo released an expose. His investigation led to an outpouring of other examples from whistleblowers in the federal government who shared their own experiences. Today Rufo will share more examples of what he found and help us understand the destructive routes of critical race theory and how it's dividing America. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Rufo: It's great to be with you.

Michelle Cordero: Chris I want to just start out by asking if you could explain at a 101 level what critical race theory is because it sounds pretty academic.

Rufo: Yeah it is academic. The origins of it are in the academy. And critical race theory is the idea that the United States is a fundamentally racist country and that all of our institutions including the law, culture, business, the economy are all designed to maintain white supremacy. And the critical race theorists argue that all of these institutions are in a sense beyond reforming, they really need to be completely dismantled in order to liberate the oppressed people.

Rufo: And it sounds extreme and I think the best way to think about it is you take the old Marxist concept of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie or the oppressed and the oppressor. But instead of looking at it in economic terms as Marx did you change it and you graft the new identity politics and you think of it in racial terms. So, instead of the poor and the rich it's essentially the white and the people of color are the two dynamics. And this is the new oppressor and oppressed and all of the old Marxist, dialectic is really just reinterpreted through the lens of race. And that's really at the heart of critical race theory. And then what you see is that that basic

academic concept is repackaged in diversity trainings, articles, academic literature, HR programs, but that's really the key core philosophical concept at its heart.

Michelle Cordero:

So that we're all unconsciously racist or bias in some way?

Christopher Rufo:

Yeah. Well, even worse than that according to the critical race theorists. According to the critical race theorists these institutions were designed in many cases explicitly to uphold white supremacy and then over time they've shifted where we don't have explicit racism, slavery, then segregation. And they basically say oppression hasn't been abolished, oppression has simply become more sophisticated, become more subtle, become more insidious. So they make the argument that we have a system today that is akin to slavery but it's more implicit, it's more subconscious, it's more hidden. And again, the constant they hold is that racism and white supremacy are constant, they're ubiquitous, they're everywhere at all times. It's just up to the intelligentsia or the vanguard to understand it, uncover it and demolish it.

Cordero: So you did a really big thing here and your investigative reporting showed everyone how this theory is infiltrating our federal government. Can you give us some examples of what you found?

Rufo: Exactly. So critical race theory, the concept that has been percolating in academic circles, really enforced since the 1990s, it used to be that you could dismiss it. You could say, "Well, that's just some academics at, universities that are doing this stuff." But what's happened in the subsequent years is that it's migrated from the academy into the nonprofit sector, into the philanthropy sector, into the education sector and into the bureaucracy so into the actual public government sector. And what I uncovered in my investigative reporting is that critical race theory has really become the default operating ideology of the federal government.

Rufo: And I uncovered a series of critical race theory based trainings at more than a half dozen, actually at this point more than a dozen government agencies. Where in one case at the Sandia National Nuclear Laboratories they held a segregated training session, a segregated re-education camp for white male executives, where they took them away for a weekend and they were teaching them how to deconstruct their white male culture, how to accept their complicity in white supremacy, and then force them to write letters including some letters of apology to women and people of color all under this idea of denouncing their own whiteness and doing better to join this critical race theory, honestly an indoctrination cult. And other examples were similar, they were really expounding on the most toxic and divisive elements of critical race theory, singling out people on the basis of race, judging people on the basis of race. In some cases, even harassing people on the basis of race which is not only awful and distasteful but it's also likely illegal as a violation of the Civil Rights Act.

Rufo: So, after all of this reporting I hammered away at this agency, after agency, after agency, predominantly using whistleblower documents that showed exactly what was happening. And then appearing on Laura Ingram and then Tucker Carlson for a feature segment I put out the call and the president answered the call and the white house put out a brilliant executive order

basically saying, "You can no longer teach the toxic and divisive concepts of critical race theory in the government and the military and also in corporations that are federal contractors."

Cordero: Another thing that I think we should really highlight further is that these trainings are taxpayer funded and there are agencies that are profiting off of this. How much do these trainings cost and are there specific figures that are well-known for these types of things?

Rufo: Yeah, it's a huge industry. I think 15 years ago I believe they estimated it as an \$8 billion industry. I imagine that it's grown sizably. On my back of the envelope estimate is it's probably a \$25 billion industry, diversity, equity and inclusion. And some of these trainers bill the federal government just absurd amounts. A man named Howard Ross who's been highlighted in my reporting according to federal records has billed the government more than \$5 million in the past 15 years for these kinds of trainings including stuff like a \$500,000 training for NASA called a Power and Privilege Sexual Orientation Workshop. So this has become a lucrative business for essentially race trainers that are brought in to government agencies to essentially teach the tenets of critical race theory, to denounce people on the basis of those theories and then collect checks at the back end.

Rufo: And needless to say, none of this has a basis in scientific fact. The evidence for many of these convictions is non-existent. And in fact, a study from Harvard University of 800 organizations over a timeframe of 30 years found that diversity trainings do nothing to actually bring people together, to improve working conditions and in some cases they actually harm the workforce. And my own reporting can confirm that where people are in some cases joining public service, they want to work for the government to deliver services to the public, to do the public good. And then they find themselves in the midst of these extremely ideological struggle sessions and they're intimidated, they're scared, they're angry, they're hurt. And employees of all racial backgrounds have told me, "This has no place in the government and thank you for getting rid of it."

Cordero: So, can you speak a little bit on how critical race theory is infiltrating not just the federal government but other institutions? As a mom I know that things have popped up on my radar that I just can't believe.

Rufo: Yeah it's everywhere and I think that we've fallen asleep unfortunately as these things have pervaded all of the institutions. I mean, corporations are going full-scale into this. They're now, the famous woke corporations or woke capitol where they're highly profitable predominantly in the major cities that are now really just falling all over themselves in order to seek the approval of the progressive media and progressive philanthropic sector and the progressive activists that really have a stranglehold on culture and power in the large cities. But I think even worse you have, this has really gone viral within the education system. And I've seen both as a reporter firsthand but also as an observer of other people's reporting that public schools are now teaching students as young as second and third grade that whiteness is synonymous with evil, that the police systematically hunt down and murder black men deliberately, and all these other highly charged political convictions that they're teaching as if they're uncontested fact.

Rufo: And I think what we found too with the pandemic as parents are having a chance to

observe what's happening in the classroom via Zoom or other teleconferencing software that they're realizing just how extreme some of the education has become. I've seen it even among friends and family where you have children that are very young, that are being essentially indoctrinated into a political ideology.

Rufo: I'll share one funny experience. A friend of mine who actually grew up in Czechoslovakia during the Soviet times she told me that the political indoctrination in schools and places like Seattle is actually worse than when she was growing up in the Soviet Union. And she said, "Because in the Soviet Union we all knew secretly that this stuff was BS, but the problem here is that they really believe it." And I think it's a wake up call to parents that they need to start getting activated, mobilized and pushing back against this ideology that is being foisted upon their children.

Cordero: Oh boy, that's really scary. That's scary stuff right there. And you mentioned some of the corporations and the woke industry. People think of large corporations like the Googles and the Amazons but it's smaller corporations too. I mean, I have friends and family who are concerned that their smaller organizations are going to force them to participate in something like this and that they'll eventually be forced to say their political leanings before they're hired for a job.

Rufo: Yeah I mean, that's certainly not out of the question and it's probably happening in many places already. And I think it is really indicative of the kind of political environment that we find ourselves in. And I think that I have many friends that are even moderate conservatives, establishment, simple, middle of the road and they're terrified. They feel like they can't speak out. They feel like there will be consequences at work. And this is a major problem and this is something that we need to work on. I think there might be some legislative changes but it's really a cultural change where you have essentially half the country has been effectively shut out of expressing their political opinions. And this is a major cultural problem and I think it's going to require a much greater effort on our behalf to change.

Rufo: Because ultimately it's not good for the country. You want to have two robust competing political philosophies, political ideologies that are really working to balance our system. And wherever you come down, I'm on the conservative side of course, I think that you want to have an intelligent and viable and responsible opposition because that actually improves life and improves governance for all of us and we're rapidly losing that. And I think we need to really shore up our system and try to change that dynamic

Cordero: Christopher Rufo, thank you so much for your important work on this issue. And after the debate a few weeks ago when this came up I really felt that there wasn't enough time for President Trump to really adequately explain what was going on. So, we really appreciate you being able to join us and break that down.

Rufo: Yeah, of course. Yeah. I think that the president did something quite stunning, quite amazing and quite powerful and I think that it's really set a new course for what can be done on this issue. And I'm optimistic that I'm now exploring a number of different avenues both as an investigative reporter but also working with lawyers and legal foundations to try to solidify some

of these gains and try to protect people from toxic, divisive and frankly hateful training sessions in workplaces all over the country.

Cordero: And that's it for this week's episode. I'm going to link to Chris's expose in our show notes in case you want to read further. And I also want to link to a recent virtual heritage event that Chris spoke on about how the left is failing to address homelessness and conservative solutions. Please share this podcast with your family and friends. You can find it on Apple podcasts, Heritage Explains Facebook page and Heritage's YouTube page. We put our episodes everywhere because we want to make it easier for you to listen and share. Thank you again for listening and we'll see you week.

Heritage Explains is brought to you by more than half a million members of the Heritage Foundation. It is produced by Michelle Cordero and Tim Doescher with editing by John Popp.



QUIZ

What Are Your Kids Learning in School?

1. **Colleges have become _____.**
 - a. havens for critical thinkers
 - b. Leftist indoctrination centers
 - c. centers for free speech
 - d. conservative-dominated think tanks

2. **How does radical change happen?**
 - a. through one huge overnight shift
 - b. through a short series of highly public events
 - c. it creeps up on us
 - d. it is immediately established through 100% consensus

3. **The 1619 Project teaches as truth that America is a fundamentally racist country and that white Americans today bear responsibility for all current and historic racism.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. **Many of our schools are teaching children that _____.**
 - a. if they're black, they're victims, whether they experience it or not
 - b. gender is something they choose for themselves
 - c. our past is terrible and that they have no future
 - d. all of the above

5. **What should American children be learning?**
 - a. that they must take responsibility for their conduct.
 - b. that hard work and rational thought are things we all value.
 - c. that America was founded to guarantee liberties and opportunities to its citizens.
 - d. all of the above



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