

# To Ban or Not to Ban Critical Race Theory: A Debate

## Not to Ban, by Walter E. Block:

Extirpating Critical Race Theory (CRT) from schools is a hot-button issue for many politicians. While I do not take a position for or against CRT, I would like to assess the propriety of CRT being debated and taught at colleges and universities.

Both proponents and opponents say that CRT claims the U.S. is systemically racist, with whites using positions of power to exploit, oppress, and offend blacks and browns. Sometimes these rights violations are purposeful, as in blatant prejudice and bigotry, but more often they are implicit. According to CRT, mathematics, science in general, ACT and SAT college-entrance exams, chess, and baroque music are all implicitly racist. Offenses can even be “microaggressions,” in which both sides are unaware of the insult. One of the goals of CRT is to make us all aware of these bellicosities.

As such, this doctrine is similar to Marxism. Unlike CRT, however, Marxism is based on economic categories: the bourgeois encroach upon the proletariat instead of one or several races upon others.

Should institutions of higher learning allow CRT into their hallowed halls? John Stuart Mill’s thoughts on free speech in [\*On Liberty\*](#) shed some light on the subject:

He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; if he does not so much as know

what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion.

If CRT is banned from universities, students and professors will not be able to wrestle with this doctrine. They may read about it, but the scholar will still be deprived, as Mill wrote, of “hear(ing) them from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them. (The scholar) must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form....” Thus, CRT should not be canceled at universities because “sunlight is the best disinfectant.”

We should not ban discussion on or debate over anything in universities devoted to seeking out the truth—whether CRT or the flat earth hypothesis. Of course, advocates of the latter view will be pulverized in an open and fair debate. This also applies to Holocaust denial, which is outlawed in Canada and several European countries. Nothing should be “off the table” insofar as learning, teaching, and discussing is concerned.

It is undeniable that the objections of CRT’s advocates to being squelched come across as hypocritical, now that the shoe is on the other foot. After all, they have never hesitated to cancel conservative and libertarian views. Nevertheless, we should ignore this hypocrisy on their part and instead follow John Stuart Mill in this matter.

## **To Ban, by Paul Gottfried:**

Reading Walter Block on the teaching of Critical Race Theory left me astonished at how abstract theories can lead otherwise persuasive polemicists astray. Does Professor Block really believe that “banning” CRT from our universities will deny students and professors the opportunity to “wrestle” with this doctrine?

Since CRT is currently being inflicted on our military, public administrators, and those employed in our corporate capitalist sector, it is hard to imagine that these ideas would vanish if

universities stopped promoting them. The problem is not that CRT is in danger of becoming extinct. It is rather that we are drowning in this antiwhite racist ideology whose proponents, Block admits, do not tolerate dissent.

Contrary to Block's thinking, CRT is not something "similar to Marxism," because it stresses "bellicosity." Rather, it is far less rational than Marxism and features the premise of blaming the white race for all the world's ills. Marxism, which, according to Block, deals with "economic categories" and the "bourgeois encroach[ing] on the proletariat," is different from CRT because it is not about the demonization of the white race.

But whatever unpleasantness CRT contains, it seems to be too intellectually important for Block not to be a part of our higher education. Perhaps Professor Block would also leave time to [Professor Derek Hook of Duquesne University](#) to plead his case that whites are so evil that they should be encouraged to commit collective suicide. Perhaps this too is something we should want college kids to wrestle with.

Block's citation of John Stuart Mill and the call by this Victorian reformer for open debate are entirely misleading. Mill supported open, not ideologically restricted, debate on political and philosophical issues; the advocates of CRT by contrast are engaged in shutting down all conceivable opposition to their views as racist and reeking of white privilege.

It seems that one can easily draw a comparison between the imposition of antiwhite racism in American educational institutions and the teaching of Nazi race theory in German universities during the Third Reich. Those who dissented from Nazi views were given no more tolerance in German universities in the 1930s than critics of CRT are now given in our academic institutions. Debate has been shut down in our onetime centers of learning; but Block is convinced that we are enhancing

education in these institutions, while manifesting our libertarian virtue, by championing the teaching of CRT.

We can easily imagine how those academic mandarins who rail against the white race would react if we tried to open academic discussion to white nationalists, Christian fundamentalists, or any other group that did not enjoy their favor. Would we be surprised if these ideologues incited violence against those who disagreed with them? But then Block is not looking very closely at how political correctness is being jammed down the throats of the young. Instead, he is celebrating an abstract “liberty,” which has nothing to do with restoring open discussion to our universities. Unfortunately, the intended recipients of Block’s generosity are tyrants who are suppressing the rights of others to hold real debates.

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