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Critical Race Theory Essay

Since the beginning of life on earth, one thing has always remained constant, Power controls all things. Whomever has the power, has the control. Think about the animal kingdom, the Lion is the king of the jungle, the great white shark is the king of the sea. Their power, whether consciously or unconsciously, is used to set up a pecking order, a food chain of dominance. They stay at the top of the food chain as the ultimate predator and every creature below them knows the social order, the water buffalo fears the lion, the fish fears the shark. However, the problem with power is it is always a hair string away from being lost. Since the dawn of humanity, the animal kingdom's power was not absolute and there are greater powers, such as humans, that can change the food chain, can destroy habitats, and can cause the elimination of a species.

Humans, as the smartest creatures on earth, the apex predator, understand the struggle with power more than anything or anyone and they use their knowledge of power to create systems of oppression, systems to ensure power stays at the top, more frankly with white people. Humanity is filled with stories of people seeking power, seeking to eliminate power, and seeking to change the balance of power. Critical Race Theory (CRT) seeks to push these stories (since stories are paramount to CRT work) to the forefront, to show that what we have always been taught to believe about race and racism may have only been a farce to keep whiteness at the top and any real progress in the Civil Rights era was out of a convergence where Whiteness and Maleness and minority interests (interest convergence) became mutually agreeable (Delgado, 2001, Tate, Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Though Critical Race Theory is complex and has splintering factions between the idealists (Crenshaw, DiAngelo, Applebaum) and the realists (materialists) (Bell, Alexander, Kendi), the history of CRT and 4 tenants are detailed and explained. Critical Race Theory emerged out of the Civil Rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s. The Civil Rights movement, though successful, focused too much on incremental

progress and step-by-step victories that took too long to realize and started to stall in the 1970s (Delgado, 2001, Ladson-Billings, 1998). A new movement was needed that focused on four main tenants: 1) racism is ordinary, 2) white people think racism is purposeful, 3) racism is a social construction and has no biological reality and color-blindness only seeks to stop current acts of racism but fails to address systems that were already established to further racism, and 4) there is a unique voice of color and that minorities can share their stories with racism and speak about racism as an expert in a way a white person could not do because of their privilege (making storytelling an important component of CRT) (Delgado, 2001, Tate, Ladson-Billings, 1998).

So why does all this matter? Ladson-Billings states that because whites place meaning and value on their whiteness as a commodity, as property, "CRT becomes an important intellectual and social tool [to look at the] "deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power" (Ladson-Billings, p. 9). Education is a systemic organization in our country that all children must go through. If we are to begin to deconstruct oppressive structures, we must start at the place where learning begins. The United States spends roughly $762 billion dollars on public K-12 education yearly. Education has met some changes, especially in the 1960s and 1970s as progressivism took hold in education and the civil rights movement led to desegregation and magnate schools started to create a more diverse student body (Skerrett, 2009). But these changes were short lived and is the biggest criticism of liberalism in the civil rights movement, it focuses on incrementalism which over time gets eroded and knocked down (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Nancy Lesko and Leslie Bloom further expand upon how changes in epistemology and pedagogy have also been eroded and that multicultural education is a shell of its once former agenda. Critical Race Theorists have a definition for the movement, and they have a mission on getting their voice heard. Most people outside the movement, as seen in the Marc Lamont Hill video, cannot even define what Critical Race Theory is, they just seek to oppose it out of the fact that it causes people to confront racism and America's

past in a way that makes white people question their role in racism, examine their privilege, and work to reconstruct socially just relations of power. It is important to eliminate the Master Script, to stop white washing America's past and stop eroding or creating a revisionist history of the past. As Yolanda Sealy-Ruiz said examining the archaeology of self is important because "this deep work has to be done before someone begins to have someone take up theoretical practices or examine their pedagogy." Sealy-Ruiz says that racism, is like a tree and racism is deeply imbedded into the roots of that tree and that is "the work that we try to fight against, whether it is through racial literacy or cultural responsive education. It is the racism that is deeply threaded through our society and certain schools are not unique."

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