

# Critical Race Theory: *Good News and Bad News*

By Fr. Dave Heney

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***The good news is the word “Critical” which affirms the goodness of questioning or having a critical attitude toward anything presented as truth, whether governments, cultures, or even religions. Our salvation story begins with Mary questioning the Angel Gabriel who announces she is to be the mother of Jesus. The Angel honors her questions and answers in a way that ensures her free consent. Sincere questions are always good. Sincere and authentic answers are even better!***

The bad news is that Critical Race Theory has a well known source, and it is important to understand it well. It all begins with Marxism.

This economic and political idea began in 1846 by Karl Marx. He correctly saw the massive disparity between social and economic classes in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. He saw that vast numbers of the poor were terribly exploited victims of selfish business and government rulers. The answer was to start a violent war between these poor and rich classes to begin a new society. This new society is led by a supreme political party called *Communists* that would hold all economic, military, and social power on behalf of the people, *with no dissent tolerated at all ...for any reason.*

Marxism defines opposing social groups and then provokes violent conflict between them. It always needs oppressed victims to champion and oppressors to fight, and labels every person as either a victim or oppressor. Marxism judges all people by the group to which they belong, rather than as individuals. That is a serious sin of prejudice.

*Therefore, every Pope since 1848 to today has condemned Marxism as incompatible with our Catholic faith. (See my article “Black Lives Matter” and “Racism & Discrimination” at [stbrunochurch.org](http://stbrunochurch.org))*

This movement of violent conflict eventually evolved into three distinct historical phases, each arising from the failure of the former to succeed.

Despite repeated failures, the basic form of all Critical Theories still remains the same today.

## **PHASE ONE: Economic Class Conflict**

Marxism became popular in the early 1900’s and led to the fall of the Russian government in 1917, and the rise of Marxist political parties in some European countries, and even had followers in America, mainly in college faculties. Marxists believed that violent war between victim and oppressor classes was surely inevitable and could never be stopped. The 1930’s Depression also implied this inevitable collapse of free market states.



However, that predicted class war did not happen. After WWII, a USA led free market economy and the rise of labor unions began an unprecedented era of global prosperity and wealth. Millions of poor people entered middle class, bought homes, went to college, and earned income in a full employment economy. This was a great disappointment in the Marxist world.

## **PHASE TWO: Cultural Class Conflict**

Critical Theory leaders after WWII needed new social groups in conflict to make Marxism succeed. The “*Frankfurt School*” thinkers in Germany analyzed mass consumer culture and defined a new social conflict pitting large commercial manufacturers and mass media as oppressors against hapless victim consumers, presenting consumers as victims of oppressive commercial mass marketing.

However, they failed to see that consumers are free to buy or not buy products as they choose. Companies are profitable only if they make a product that people want, and most important, also buy. Consumers are actually in charge of the economy, and so do not feel oppressed at all.

Critical Theorists had failed in these first two phases of finding victim and oppressor classes and conflicts that would lead to societal changes.

### **PHASE THREE: Racial Class Conflict**

Critical Theory leaders now use race to find victims and oppressors to create conflict. They know there are still people today who are racists and people who still feel oppressive discrimination. They use events in the news of discrimination as tragic proof of systemic racism.

However, we should not confuse *personal* racial prejudices with *systemic* racial prejudices that come from government or institutional systems.

Racism was tragically the law years ago and was truly systemic. The separate treatment of black and white people in restaurants, transportation and education was clearly immoral but still legal. *It was actually the law to be racist*, which is the very definition of *systemic* racism.

That is why Martin Luther King Jr. did not march against racism as a terrible personal sin which he knew would never end, but rather to *practically* and *effectively* help enact the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, that made racism illegal everywhere. By definition, that ended "*systemic racism*" even though it could never end the personal sin of racism in bad individuals.

Those laws made racism a crime, and provided a firm legal recourse for anyone seeking justice. In his famous "*I have a dream*" speech, King wanted people to be "*judged by the content of their character ...and not the color of their skin.*"

This ideal is why each Critical Theory phase, that now includes race, has been so wrong. All judge people by their economic, cultural, or racial group identity, and not by personal virtue and character.

Race, gender, and ethnicity are always good to see and not ignore, but never for prejudgment. Again, the sin of prejudice. The Statue of Justice is always portrayed as blind to those features.

While people can change their Phase One class or Phase Two cultural choices, race is not a choice. There is no escape from the racial oppressor or victim group that Critical Race Theory assigns you! This assigns a group identity to innocent persons no matter what your good behavior or choices!

***Ironically, the worst feature of Critical Theory leaders is their intolerance ...of criticism! They use a "cancel culture" against any questioning, and Social Media and public shaming to do it. This is classic Marxism ...shutting off any dissent.***

No Marxist system has ever worked well. Critical Theories remain failed ideas from 1846 to today. They only succeed in creating conflict, strife ...and often the racism and prejudice they claim to fight.

### **Critical Race Theory in Schools**

There is a new movement to bring Marxist ideas into public schools and create conflict between students, families, neighborhoods, and even religions. The "*1619 Project*" is a school program that re-writes American history to again judge events and oppose peoples by racial groups. *This can never be taught in Catholic Schools.* I will have a new article on the "*1619 Project*" soon.

### **Mary's Critical Question of the Angel Gabriel**

We began with God asking Mary to be the Mother of Jesus. God heard her question and answered it through the Angel Gabriel. God always honors both our need to question and our *individual* free will. We always stand before God not as members of any group or race, but as *free persons always responsible to God for our own behavior.*

We always find the courage, grace, and wisdom we need from Jesus to confront Marxist ideas. He remains the source of true and lasting happiness.

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*(Resources: Theodore Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Richard Delgado, Derek Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw)*