

Debunkers: Trevor Noah on Teaching “History” ie. Critical Race Theory

Intro

- 0:00 - 1:20

1) “Nobody in America is winning more than white people”

- 1:08
- Full quote: “If history is taught by winners, nobody in America is winning more than white people”
- [This snapshot](#) from a US Census Bureau report says otherwise.
- See the Xcel file I attached for a more robust data set. I downloaded it from [this](#) census report.
- **Conclusion:** Asian-Americans have a higher median household income than white Americans. In economic terms, they are “winning” more than white people.

Part 1: CBS Video

- 1:20 - 1:45

1) “Less than 10% of class time is devoted to black history”

- 1:20
- Source: A report entitled *Research into the State of African American History and Culture in K-12 Public Schools*. Published in 2016 by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. [View report here](#).
- The particular finding states that teachers typically dedicate 8-9% of lesson time specifically to African American history during the academic year.
- **Conclusion:** Over an entire school year’s worth of history curriculum, roughly 8-9% of the time is spent specifically studying African American history. Considering the majority of our history curriculum consists of studying the history of Europe and America, one could argue 8-9% is in fact disproportionately high. Lastly, this 8-9% only consists of time spent *specifically* on African American history; ie. it does not include the times African American history is brought up while discussing other topics.

2) "Only 8% can identify slavery as a central cause of the civil war"

- 1:24
- Source: A report entitled *Teaching Hard History, American Slavery*. Published in 2018 by the Southern Poverty Law Center's "Teaching Tolerance" project. [View report here](#).
- The specific question asked was as follows:
 - 17. Which was the reason the South seceded from the Union?
 - a. To preserve states' rights
 - b. To preserve slavery
 - c. To protest taxes on imported goods
 - d. To avoid rapid industrialization
 - e. Not sure
- The report lists option (b) as the correct answer.
- **Conclusion:** First off, CBS's reporting is misleading because they claim "only 8% can identify slavery as **a** central cause of the civil war." However, the survey was clearly asking students to identify slavery as **the** central cause of the civil war. Therefore they are deceitful in their framing of the issue. Additionally, they conveniently leave out the fact that "Not sure" was an option, and that other options like (a) and (d) are fairly viable answers.
- **Extra Info Part 1:** The survey itself is fairly biased, as seen in the following question:
 - 2. What was the Middle Passage?
 - a. A system of roads in West Africa leading to the coast
 - b. A type of ship built specifically to transport human beings
 - c. Another name for the "Triangular Trade"
 - d. The journey across the Atlantic of Africans stolen for the slave trade
 - e. Not sure
 - The authors list (d) as the correct answer. The phrasing "Africans stolen for the slave trade" is incredibly misleading because even though there were isolated incidents of Europeans raiding African villages and capturing slaves, the vast majority of slaves taken across the Atlantic were sold to Europeans by other Africans.
 - Accordingly to UT Austin's Professor of History Steven Mintz: "Some African societies – like Benin in southern Nigeria – refused to sell slaves. Others, like Dahomey, appear to have specialized in enslavement. Still other societies, like Asante, in present-day Ghana, and the Yoruba in western Nigeria, engaged in wars [with other Africans] that produced as many as half of all eighteenth and early nineteenth century slaves."

- **Extra Info Part 2:** SPLC's "Teaching Tolerance" project has now been rebranded as "Learning for Justice." [Here's an article](#) in which they explain their name change.
- The article gives a clear indication of their political leanings. It includes phrases like:
 - "eradicating hate by fighting intolerance in schools"
 - "ongoing racial injustice and blatant white supremacy"
- And of course:
 - "We're promoting policies that ensure queer students are safe on campus. We're navigating critical conversations with young people about race, gender, class and more. We're advocating for sanctuary schools where students and their families won't be afraid of deportation. We're offering guidance on procedures and policies to interrupt a school-to-prison pipeline that disproportionately removes Black, Latinx and Indigenous students from their classrooms, their families and their communities."
- As opposed to white supremacy as those at Learning for Justice appear to be, they conveniently forget that the term "Latinx" was likely created by a white academic who never spoke any Spanish, but insisted that we refer to Latinos as such. Talk about linguistic colonialism...
 - (lol I don't expect you to include this point at all, but as someone who speaks Spanish and has a lot of latino friends, the "latinx" thing always grinds my gears!)

3) "There is no national standard for what history is taught"

- 1:30
- CBS says this like it's a bad thing. However, in their [written piece](#) that accompanied the video report, they unknowingly contradict themselves.
- In that article, CBS cites [this study](#) to show how the field of Social Studies (and therefore, the time given to African American history) is being marginalized.
- The abstract of the study states: "...the marginalization of social studies is an enduring trend over the last two decades, a byproduct of an educational policy shift toward national standardization."
- **Conclusion:** CBS argues for a national standardization of educational material, yet fails to notice that one of the sources it cites claims that national standardization is exactly what contributes to the erosion of social studies, and by extension, time given to African American history.

4) "7 states do not directly mention slavery"

- 1:40

- The words “state standards” flash on-screen for a second, but are left out of the voiceover. CBS therefore frames the issue to make you believe seven states don’t even mention slavery in the classroom.
- However, this only means that the word “slavery” is not mentioned in a state’s curriculum standards. It certainly doesn’t mean it’s not covered.
- I attached the Delaware History Standards for grades K-12 in case you care to see how a blue state (that doesn’t include the word “slavery” in its standards) outlines its curriculum.
- In CBS’s written piece, they even state: “As for the states that do not—or only briefly mention—slavery or the civil rights movement, Dr. Tina Heafner, president of the National Council for the Social Studies, said this does not necessarily mean students are not learning about these topics.”
- **Conclusion:** Just because a state doesn’t include the word “slavery” in its social studies standards doesn’t mean kids don’t learn about it. Most standards don’t include names like “George Washington” or terms like “the French Revolution” but kids still learn about them. Many state standards focus more on the process of learning and development of different skill sets, leaving it to the local school districts to determine what specific historical figures and topics are taught.

5) “Most students in America are only taught about a handful of important black Americans”

- 1:46-2:26
- Majority of western history is white. Majority of Americans throughout history were white. So it’s natural that most historical figures we learn about are white.
- HOWEVER, it’s also clear that we do in fact teach students about important African Americans. Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Muhammad Ali, Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, W.E.B Du Bois, Malcom X, Jackie Robinson, Sojourner Truth, and Booker T. Washington are just some of the African Americans who most students in American are likely to recognize at least by name.
- The “sketch” Trevor does is just downright silly. Respond to that however you like.
- **Conclusion:** Most American students do, in fact, learn about many important black Americans.

Part 2: Pushes to Diversify Curriculum

- 2:35-4:05

1) We're starting to change and study "what actually happened"

- 2:35-2:52
- See video for full quote
- Trevor's right in theory (that we should learn what actually happened; study things as they are), but he then uses this as a transition into critical race theory (CRT) which definitely *does not* portray things as they are.
- **Conclusion:** Trevor's right, we need to study things as they are. But that's exactly why we can't teach CRT.

2) Call for Anti-Racist Education

- 2:53
- Classic example of using a nice-sounding term (antiracist, pro-life, etc) to conceal a darker reality
- Antiracism is a tenant of Critical Race theory that says it's impossible to simply be a neutral "not racist." You can only either be an ally or enemy in the fight against racism.
- According to critical race theorist Robin DiAngelo, "the question is not 'did racism take place?' but rather, 'how did racism manifest in this situation?'" ([Source](#))
- A popular example used is that of a black customer and a white customer entering a store at the same time. If the white sales assistant approaches the white customer to offer help first, this is identified as racism because it prioritizes the white person's needs. However, if the sales assistant approaches the black customer first, this is identified as racism because it can be read as indicating a distrust of black people and an unwillingness to have them browse the shelves unsupervised. The shop assistant's perception of her own motivations are irrelevant, and, to be a conscientious antiracist, she needs to admit her racism and pledge to do better.
- **Conclusion:** None of this has anything to do with teaching America's history. Trevor's question that introduces this clip ("should we keep telling ourselves what we wished happened, or should we understand what actually happened?") is ironic because in the example given above, only an antiracist would tell himself "what he wished happened" by reading racist intentions into a normal situation. Any normal person could see that "what actually happened" was just a normal situation in which a shopkeeper speaks to one customer first, in a way that's not at all indicative of racial bias.

3) "They aim to have books written by a person of color"

- 2:59
- The death of MLK's dream. Choosing a book not by "the content of its character" but by the color of the author's skin.
- The **petition** in question states: "While math, science, history, and English are all considered "integral academic pursuits", so is learning to be anti-racist. We all live in America, and it is undeniable that this country was built upon the foundations of slavery, followed closely by sharecropping, then segregation, then the War on Drugs, and the list goes on and on."
- In the petition's **recommended booklist**, some of the books are actually legitimate reads (*Just Mercy*, for ex), but most of them are clearly partisan and rooted in CRT (Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist*). What's more, books like Kendi's aren't even "literary" reads. (As opposed to Toni Morrison's *Beloved* which is also on the list). Interesting, Maya Angelou doesn't show up on their list.
- **Conclusion:** Literature should be about exploring great writing and the time-proven insights into human nature that quality literature offers. It should *not* be about fitting racial quotas and teaching political ideology with clearly biased reads.

4) "Kids are going to TikTok to learn"

- 3:28-3:40
- "That's how much education is lacking in America: Kids are going to TikTok to learn"
- **Conclusion:** Yea, and they'll start doing so even more if you keep cutting out the classics in favor of woke literature. Or if you replace an honest telling of history with unscientific antiracist nonsense ("C'mon, man!")

5) "I'm not saying you can't learn history from TikTok..."

- 3:49-4:05
- **Conclusion:** This joke is so cringe. 'Nough said.

Part 3: Strong Reaction & CRT

- 4:35 - 6:38

- Basically everything the Fox guests say is spot on. Here's why:

1) "CRT teaches people not to treat others based on the content of their character, but solely on the content of their skin"

- 4:52
- Very accurate. One of the main tenants of CRT is that "color-blindness" is ineffective and should be actively disavowed. As Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw writes in *Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law*: "This belief in color-blindness and equal-process, however, would make no sense at all in a society in which identifiable groups had actually been treated differently historically and in which the effects of this difference in treatment continued into the present."
- Critical race theorists also denounce racial integration. In *A Critique of "Our Constitution Is Colorblind"* by Neil Gotanda, racial integration is called "cultural genocide." This verbatim phrase is immediately followed by: "In short, assimilation as a societal goal has grave potential consequences for blacks and other nonwhites. However utopian it appears, the color-blind assimilationist program implies the hegemony of white culture."
- **Conclusion:** CRT actively teaches you to judge people by the color of their skin. This is because critical race theorists believe the idea of "colorblindness" only bulwarks the pre-existing racist institutions of America (more on that in point below) and leads to the cultural genocide of minorities.

2) "It teaches that America is inherently racist"

- 5:07
- True. Critical race theorists point towards any unwanted statistical differences (infant mortality rates, incarceration rates, median household income, etc) between racial groups as evidence of racism. In fact, they believe that all these differences are caused primarily by racism.
- In *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment* (written by critical race theorists Mari J. Matsuda, Charles R. Lawrence III, Richard Delgado, and Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw), the authors state: "As critical race theorists we adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage among racial lines, including differences in income, imprisonment, health, housing, education, political representation, and military service."
- Critical race theorists then redefine racism to apply not to individuals but to power structures in society. They say that if those power structures have a racial bias (meaning they're geared to benefit people of one race and subordinate people of another race) then those power structures are racist and anyone complicit with those power structures is

also racist.

- In *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (edited by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas), the authors state: "Although Critical Race scholarship differs in object, argument, accent, and emphasis, it is nonetheless unified by two common interests. The first is to understand how a *regime of white supremacy* [emphasis mine] and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America, and, in particular, to examine the relationship between that social structure and professed ideals such as "the rule of law" and "equal protection."
- Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw also states in *Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law*: "Racist ideology thus operates in conjunction with the class components of legal ideology to reinforce the status quo."
- **Conclusion:** CRT teaches that racism is a pillar that holds up American society. American institutions, laws, education system, culture, economic system, and politics make up the "status quo" referenced by Crenshaw. It teaches that America has "created and maintained" a "regime of white supremacy."

3) "If you're born white, you're necessarily racist"

- 5:12
- In *Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law*, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw states: "The end of Jim Crow has been accompanied by the demise of an explicit ideology of white supremacy. The white norm, however, has not disappeared; it has only been submerged in popular consciousness."
- Critical race theorists reason that since the norms of America are fundamentally "white," anyone who's values are reflected in those norms or who benefits from them is "effectively white."
- So, anyone who is white or "effectively white" is complicit in a "regime of white supremacy" and therefore racist.
- **Conclusion:** Yes, CRT teaches that if you're white, you're necessarily racist.

4) "Tearing up is a white woman's go-to move..."

- 5:43
- Honestly, this is just cruel. All the information I provided above proves why CRT is full of baloney and why it's possible to be opposed to it without being racist.
- By the way, him generalizing about white women is pretty racist. Imagine if roles were reversed.

- **Conclusion:** Whatever you do please just call Trevor out on this crap. It's disgusting, cruel, and actually genuinely racist.

5) "...that's not necessarily what teaching about racism does"

- 5:58-6:09
- Bruh. None of what Trevor covered in the past two minutes was actually about teaching history, it was about teaching CRT. As per the evidence above, CRT clearly *does* teach white kids that they are inherently racist.
- **Conclusion:** Trevor is confounding teaching history with teaching CRT. History doesn't teach kids they're racist, but CRT does.

6) Redlining

- 6:10-6:32
- For some reason I'm thinking you've discussed redlining before and that you're already well-versed on this. Please let me know if I'm mistaken and if you'd like me to provide more sources.
- **Conclusion:** Trevor uses the example of redlining to justify "teaching history realistically." He uses that phrase, however, to mean "teaching CRT," which of course we know isn't history at all.

7) "You can look at your history critically without believing that you are personally to blame for it"

- 6:33-7:01
- This is true. But again, Trevor hasn't once given an example of actually studying history critically, he's only promoted the teaching of CRT, which is a far cry from any nuanced and factually "critical" study of history.
- **Conclusion:** The real reason little Klaus isn't crying is because he's simply being taught history. He's not being taught about a "regime of white supremacy" or his inherently racist participation in that system. He's not studying under a curriculum that applies racial quotas for the authors being read. He's just being taught history.

Part 4: "Hysteria spilling into laws"

- 7:03-8:27
- Anything that blocks CRT or the 1619 Project is cool by me!

1) "Several states have worked to ban the 1619 Project and CRT from their core education plans"

- 7:13
- For reasons already covered, it's clear that banning CRT is good.
- Banning the 1619 Project is good too. Here's why:
- [This article](#) was written by a history professor who was asked to fact-check the 1619 Project, but then was ignored by the NYT after submitting his critiques.
- Excerpt: "I had vigorously argued against with her fact-checker: that the patriots fought the American Revolution in large part to preserve slavery in North America...Although slavery was certainly an issue in the American Revolution, the protection of slavery was not one of the main reasons the 13 Colonies went to war."
- Another excerpt: "Far from being fought to preserve slavery, the Revolutionary War became a primary disrupter of slavery in the North American Colonies. Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, a British military strategy designed to unsettle the Southern Colonies by inviting enslaved people to flee to British lines, propelled hundreds of enslaved people off plantations and turned some Southerners to the patriot side. It also led most of the 13 Colonies to arm and employ free and enslaved black people, with the promise of freedom to those who served in their armies. While neither side fully kept its promises, thousands of enslaved people were freed as a result of these policies."
- [This site](#) displays the letter 12 history professors wrote to the NYT to dispute the project's claims.
- Excerpt: "As historians and students of the Founding and the Civil War era, our concern is that The 1619 Project offers a historically-limited view of slavery, especially since slavery was not just (or even exclusively) an American malady, and grew up in a larger context of forced labor and race. Moreover, the breadth of 400 years and 300 million people cannot be compressed into single-size interpretations; yet, The 1619 Project asserts that every aspect of American life has only one lens for viewing, that of slavery and its fall-out. "America Wasn't a Democracy Until Black Americans Made It One," insists the lead essay by Nikole Hannah-Jones; "American Capitalism Is Brutal. You Can Trace That to the Plantation," asserts another by Matthew Desmond. In some cases, history is reduced to metaphor: "How Segregation Caused Your Traffic Jam."
- In [this article](#), the 1619 Project's author Nikole Hannah-Jones says "history is not objective" and justifies her use of a subjective framing of history
- More resources from [Forbes](#) and hell, even [CNN](#)!

- **Conclusion:** The 1619 Project deserves to be banned from schools for the way it subjectively and inaccurately portrays history. Hopefully the sources I provide allow you to address this point however you deem fit.

2) "Lawmaker now under fire for comments made on floor.."

- 7:30-8:27
- See video for full quote. The guy basically gets called out for using the very standard idiomatic expression "the good, the bad, the ugly" in reference to slavery. It was a slip up, but Trevor of course tries to spin it.
- **Conclusion:** The lawmaker clearly made a mistake using a go-to English idiom. Trevor doesn't acknowledge this and opts to make us suffer through more of his liberal "humor" (I use that word graciously)

Part 5: Cancel culture and power of government

- 8:27-9:50

1) "Same people who freak out about cancel culture..."

- 8:27-8:39
- Trevor confounds the cancelling of people for ideas like "there are two genders" with the desire to cancel a thoroughly racist, divisive, and unscientific theory (CRT) from entering school curriculums.
- **Conclusion:** Not the same thing at all, bro.

2) Mr. Potato Head joke

- 8:40
- Background: The Mr. Potato Head toy line removed the "Mr." from the brand name in order to make the product gender neutral.
- Here's a [NYT article](#) on it. The brand update is accompanied by "a whimsical color palette and more inclusive messaging" so kids can create their own heteronormative-or-not families.
- **Conclusion:** It's another dumb joke. Again, cancel culture has nothing in common with the

teaching of CRT.

3) "More laws are written to protect upper classes..."

- 8:53
- Not a bad point for most of this.
- But at 9:38-9:47, another racist joke. Admittedly not a bad one, but of course if the roles were reversed and the white man wasn't at the receiving end of the joke, it'd be considered racist.
- **Conclusion:** Trevor finally begin to share something that's not logically incoherent, but then ends the segment with a joke that reveals double standards. Good job, dude.

Part 6: What is point of teaching history?

- 9:50-10:30

1) "Give them an unsparing assessment..."

- 9:50-10:13
- **Conclusion:** Yes, giving students an unsparing assessment of history is a good thing. This is why we shouldn't allow the 1619 Project to be taught, much less introduce the nonsensical CRT (which has nothing to do with history, by the way) into our classrooms.

2) "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it"

- 10:19
- CRT is Marxist. The authors of the aforementioned works admit as much:
- "Organized by a collection of neo-Marxist intellectuals...we turned to new approaches. Borrowing from and critiquing other intellectual traditions, including liberalism, Marxism, the law and society movement, critical legal studies, feminism, poststructuralism/postmodernism, and neopragmatism...we examined the role of liberal-capitalist ideology in maintaining an unjust racial status quo..."
- The authors also state in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*: "By legitimizing the use of race as a theoretical fulcrum and focus in legal scholarship, so-called racialist accounts of racism and the law grounded the subsequent development of Critical Race Theory in much the same way that Marxism's introduction of class structure and struggle into classical political economy grounded subsequent

critiques of social hierarchy and power.”

- **Conclusion:** You’re right again, Trevor - those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it. Coincidentally, that’s exactly why we should learn from the past experience of Russia, and ban divisive and dangerous neo-Marxist ideologies from entering our classrooms.