



COLSON CENTER

National Conference

# Loving Those Taken Captive By Lies: Understanding and Critiquing Critical Theory

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Colson Center National Conference

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This talk is not about Trump



This talk is not about Trump



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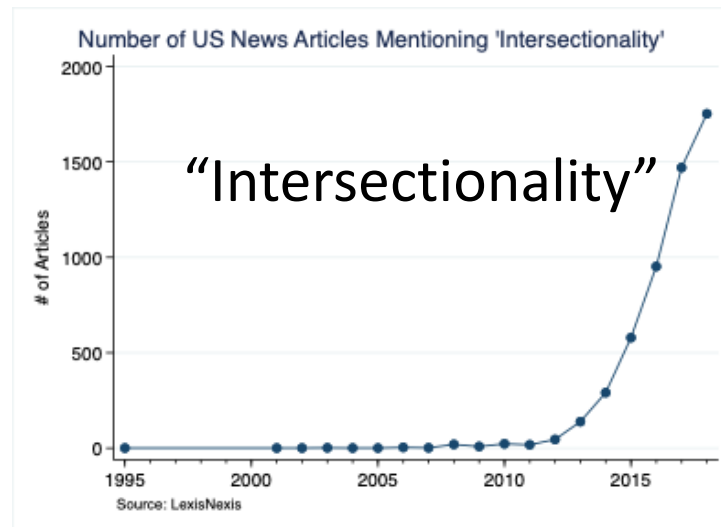
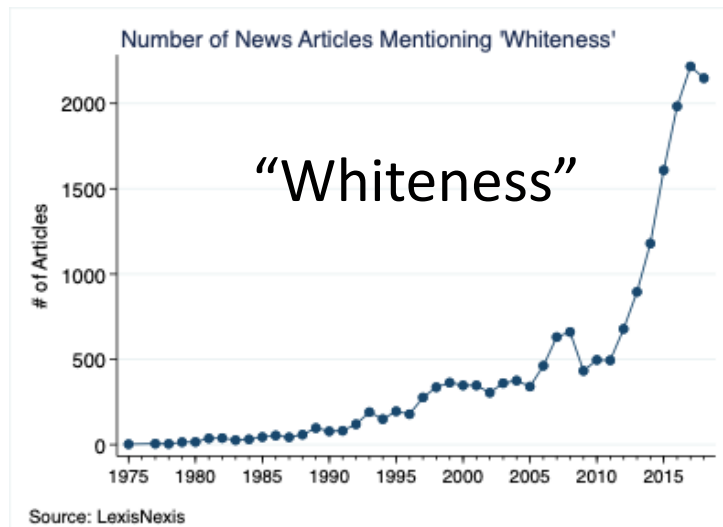
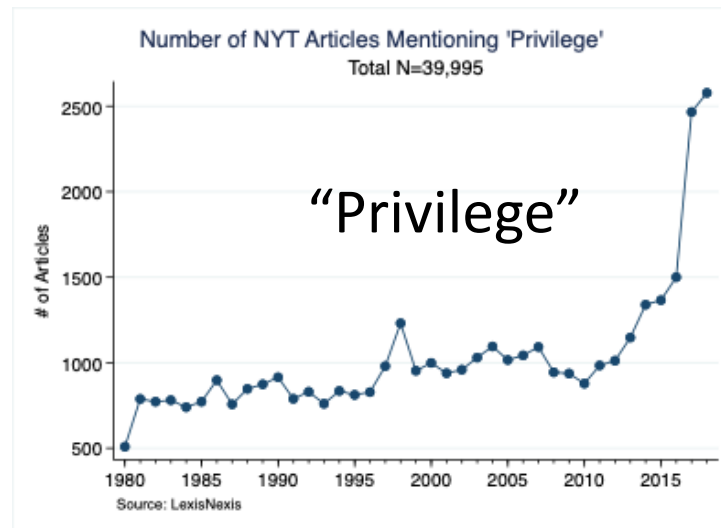
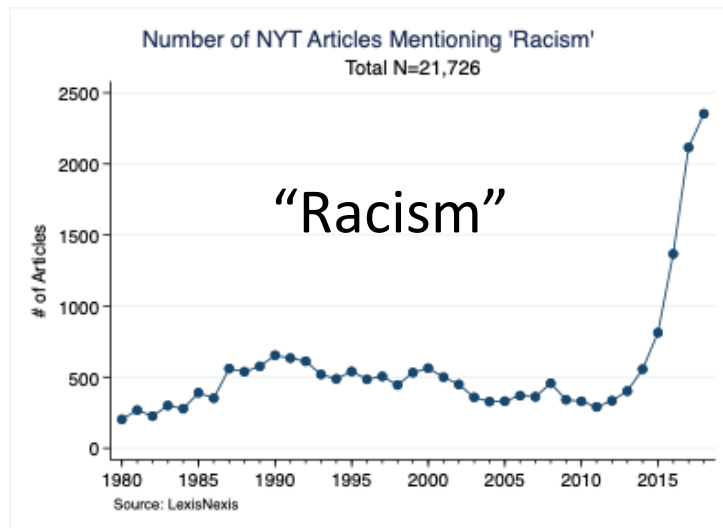
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# NYTimes word usage




# Smithsonian NMAAHC


*"Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups of are compared."*

**TALKING ABOUT RACE | NMAAHC**

**ASPECTS & ASSUMPTIONS OF WHITENESS & WHITE CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES**



White dominant culture, or **whiteness**, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes and ways of life have been normalized over time and are now considered standard practices in the United States. And since white people still hold most of the institutional power in America, we have all internalized some aspects of white culture — including people of color.




**Rugged Individualism**

- The individual is the primary unit
- Self-reliance
- Independence & autonomy highly valued + rewarded
- Individuals assumed to be in control of their environment, *"You get what you deserve"*

**Family Structure**

- The nuclear family: father, mother, 2.3 children is the ideal social unit
- Husband is breadwinner and head of household
- Wife is homemaker and subordinate to the husband
- Children should have own rooms, be independent



**Emphasis on Scientific Method**

- Objective, rational linear thinking
- Cause and effect relationships
- Quantitative emphasis

# Black Lives Matter

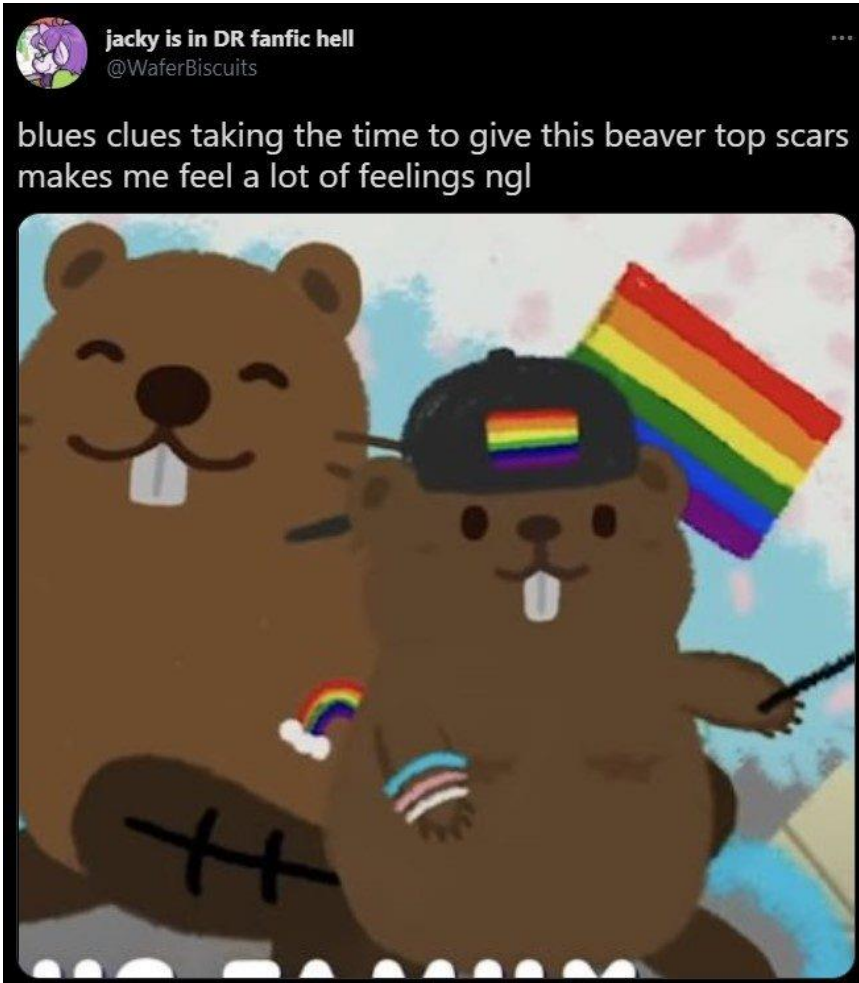
“We are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women who continue to be disproportionately impacted by trans-antagonistic violence...

We foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking, or rather, the belief that all in the world are heterosexual (unless s/he or they disclose otherwise).”





# Blue's Clues Pride Month Cartoon



"Families marching one-by-one  
Hurrah, hurrah

Families marching one-by-one  
Hurrah, hurrah

This family has two mommies  
They love each other so proudly  
And they all go marching in the Big  
Parade...

These babas are non-binary  
They love each other so proudly...

Ace, bi and pan grown-ups you see can  
love each other so proudly  
And they all go marching in the Big  
Parade"

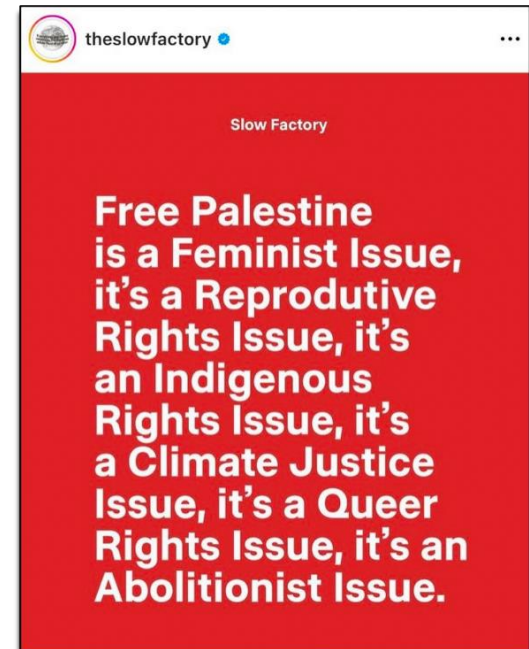
# Queers for Palestine



## BLACK LIVES MATTER GRASSROOTS STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE



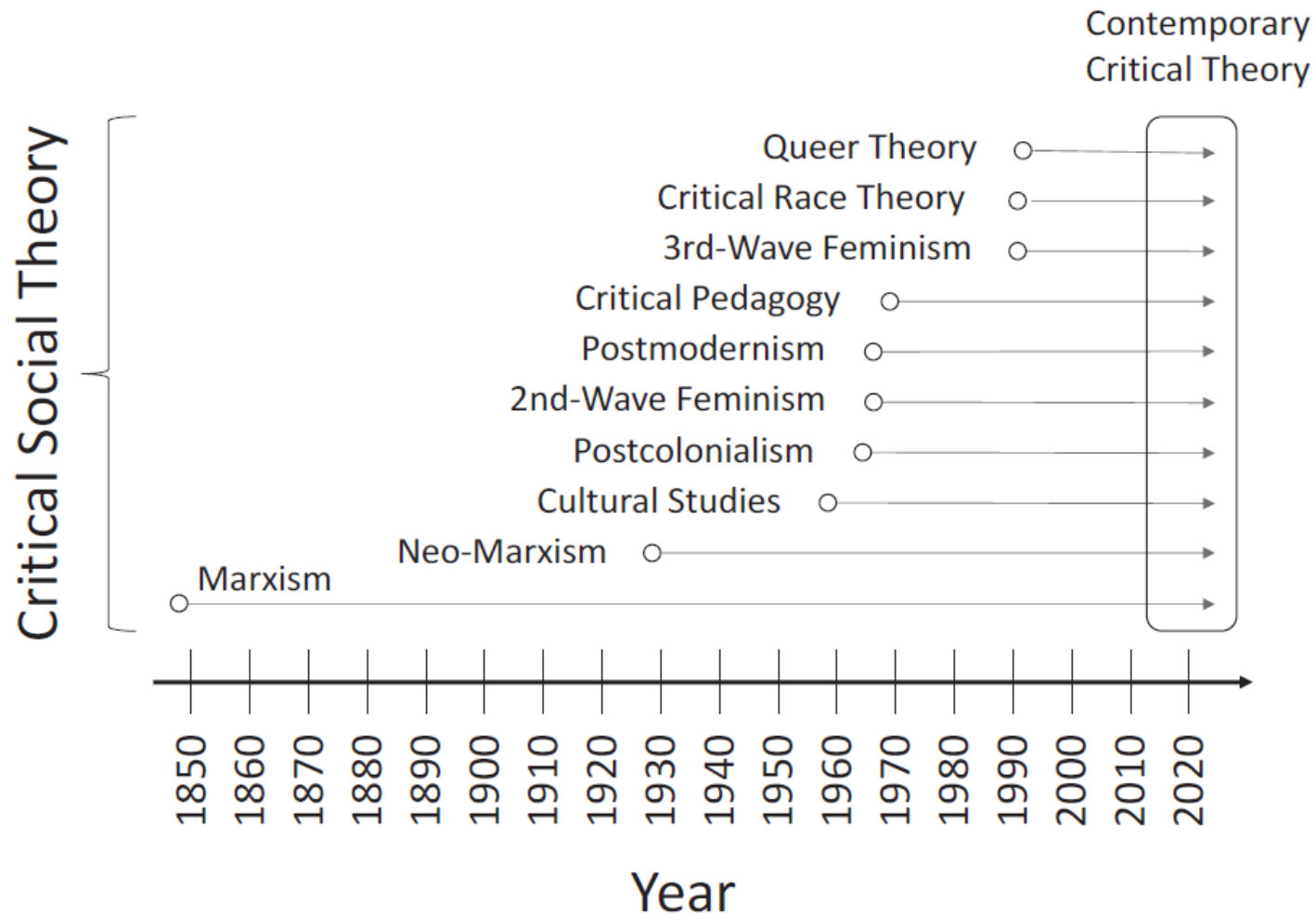
As the world is faced with deep questions about self-determination, as we all desire and pray for a world of peace,, we must stand unwaveringly on the side of the oppressed. When a people have been subject to decades of apartheid and unimaginable violence, their resistance must not be condemned, but understood as a desperate act of self-defense.



# Outline

- What Is Contemporary Critical Theory?
- A False Identity
- A False Epistemology
- A False Salvation
- Freeing the Captives

# The history of contemporary critical theory





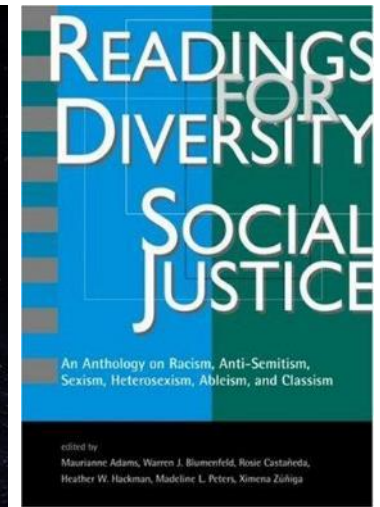
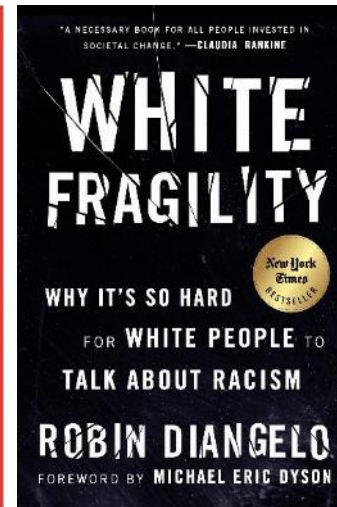
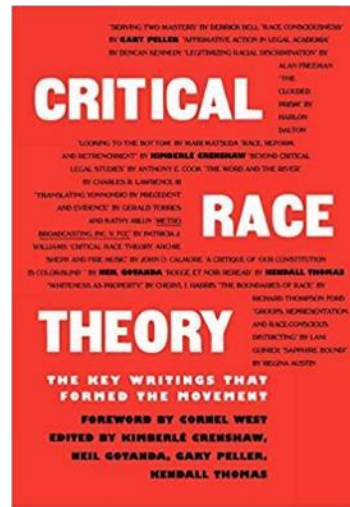
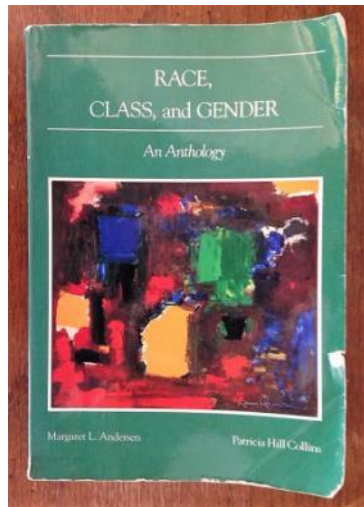
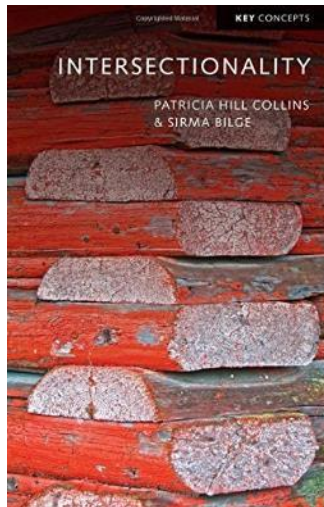
# The central ideas of contemporary critical theory?

Idea 1: Social binary

Idea 2: Oppression through ideology

Idea 3: Lived experience

Idea 4: Social justice



# Idea #1: Society is divided into oppressed and oppressor groups

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Is Everyone Really Equal?

**Figure 5.1. Group Identities Across Relations of Power**

Minoritized/Target Group	Oppression	Dominant/ Agent Group
Peoples of Color	Racism	White
Poor Working Class	Classism	Owning Class
Middle Class		
Women; Transgender; Genderqueer	Sexism	(cis)Men
Gays; Lesbians; Bisexuals; Two Spirit	Heterosexism	Heterosexuals
Muslims; Buddhists; Jews; Hindus; and other non-Christ- ian groups	Religious Oppression Anti-Semitism	Christians
People with Disabilities	Ableism	Able-bodied
Immigrants (perceived)	Nationalism	Citizens (perceived)
Indigenous Peoples	Colonialism	White Settlers



# Idea #2: Oppression occurs through hegemonic power

“*Hegemony* refers to the control of the ideology of society. **The dominant group maintains power by imposing their ideology on everyone.**”

“From a critical social justice perspective, **privilege is defined as systemically conferred dominance** and the institutional processes by which the beliefs and values of the dominant group are ‘made normal’ and universal.” – Sensoy and DiAngelo, *Is Everyone Really Equal?* p. 73, 80



# Idea #3: “Lived experience” gives oppressed groups privileged access to truth

## Oppression and epistemology:

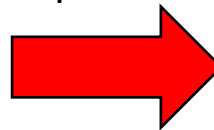


Privilege



Internalized oppression

Lived  
experience

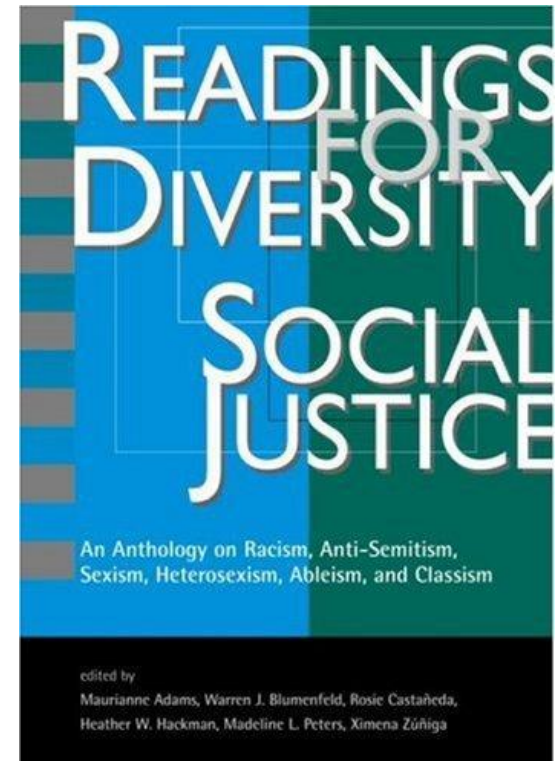


Liberatory consciousness





# Idea #4: Social justice demands the liberation of oppressed groups

## Definition of social justice:

“Prior to celebrating diversity, we must first eliminate intolerance. No matter what form it takes or who does it, we must all take action to stop intolerance when it happens. Working towards a celebration of diversity implies working for **social justice – the elimination of all forms of social oppression**... Social injustice takes many forms. It can be injustice based on a person’s **gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, or economic class.**” – Mary McClintock, “How to Interrupt Oppressive Behavior,” *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, p. 483



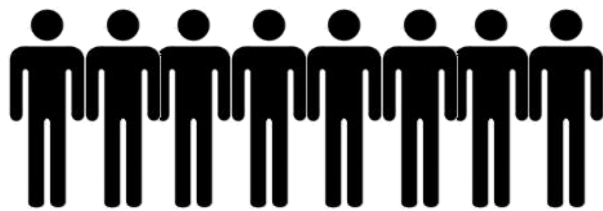
# Christianity and contemporary critical theory are competing worldviews

Christianity			
<b>Creation</b> 	<b>The Fall</b> 	<b>Redemption</b> 	<b>Restoration</b> 
Contemporary Critical Theory			
--	Racism Ableism OPPRESSION Heterosexism Cisgenderism	Protest Resistance ACTIVISM Education Awareness	Equality Power reversal LIBERATION Justice Diversity

# Outline

- What Is Contemporary Critical Theory?
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- A False Epistemology
- A False Salvation
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# A false identity



White

Male

Rich

Heterosexual

Cisgender

Christian

Able-bodied

Non-white

Female

Poor

Homosexual

Transgender

Non-Christian

Disabled



# A false identity

“I began to understand why **we [White women] are justly seen as oppressive**, even when we don't see ourselves that way. I began to count the ways in which I enjoy unearned skin privilege and have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence.

**My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person**, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will.”

— Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege,” in *Race, Class, and Gender*, 72



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# A false epistemology

**“It is about race if a person of color thinks it’s about race.** This may sound at first like I’m asking you to just take every person of color’s word for it, as if they are infallible... But the truth is, whether or not someone is fallible is beside the point. We are, each and every one of us, a collection of our lived experiences... **And our experiences are valid**...And so, if a person of color says that something is about race, it is— because regardless of the details, regardless of whether or not you can connect the dots from the outside, their racial identity is a part of them, and it is interacting with the situation.”

—Oluo, *So You Want to Talk About Race?* 15



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# A false salvation

	<b>Christianity</b>	<b>Contemporary Critical Theory</b>
<b>Sin</b>	<b>Rebellion:</b> breaking God's commandments	<b>Privilege:</b> whiteness, patriarchy, classism, heterosexism, ableism, cisgenderism
<b>Salvation</b>	<b>Redemption:</b> repent and believe the gospel	<b>Activism:</b> confess your privilege, divest from privilege, do the work, center marginalized voices, stop taking up space

# A false salvation

**“a positive white identity is an impossible goal. White identity is inherently racist; white people do not exist outside the system of white supremacy.** This does not mean that we should stop identifying as white and start claiming only to be Italian or Irish. To do so is to deny the reality of racism in the here and now, and this denial would simply be color-blind racism. Rather, **I strive to be ‘less white.’ To be less white is to be less racially oppressive.”**

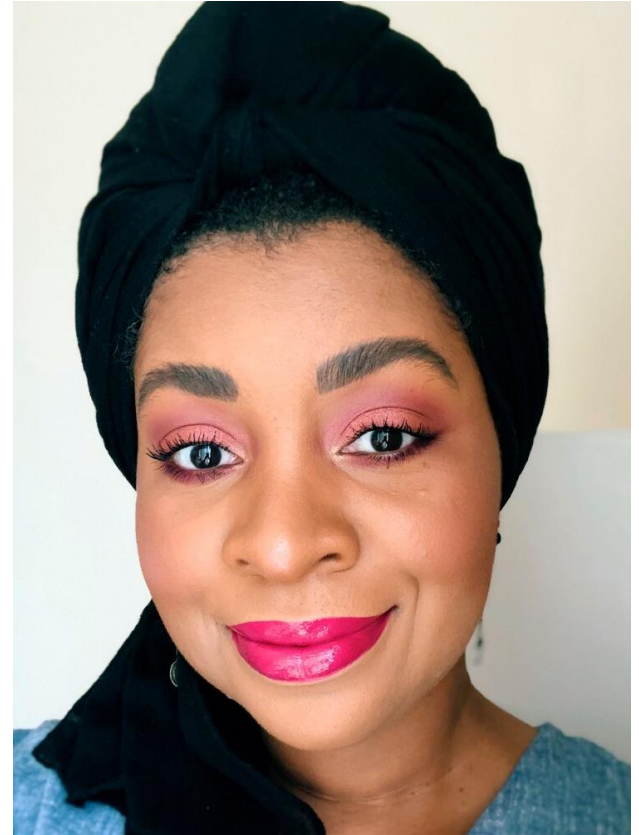
– DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 149-150.





# A false salvation

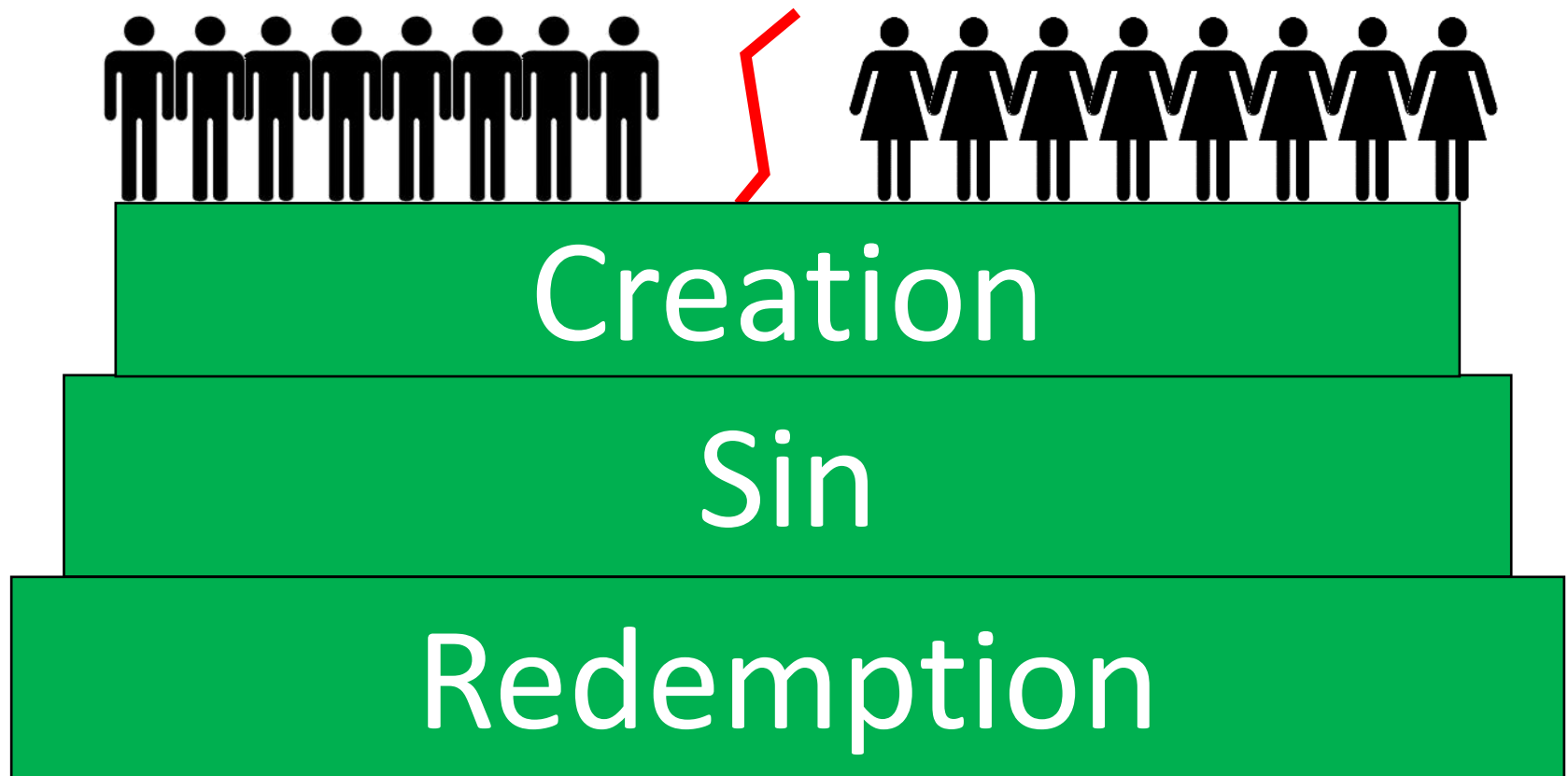
“Antiracism work is not a twenty-eight-day journey. **It is a lifelong practice. It requires your lifelong commitment to antioppression...** There is no feel-good reward at the end other than the knowledge that you are doing this because it’s the right thing to do.”  
– Layla Saad, *Me and White Supremacy*, 25.



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# Christianity and identity



# Christianity and epistemology

- “let every person be **quick to hear, slow to speak**, slow to anger.” – James 1:19
- “when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. **You need not be afraid of him.**” – Deut. 18:22
- “The one who states his case first seems right, **until the other comes and examines him.**” – Prov. 18:17
- “**To the teaching and to the testimony!** If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” – Isa. 8:20
- “He presented himself alive to them after his suffering **by many proofs**, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.” – Acts 1:3

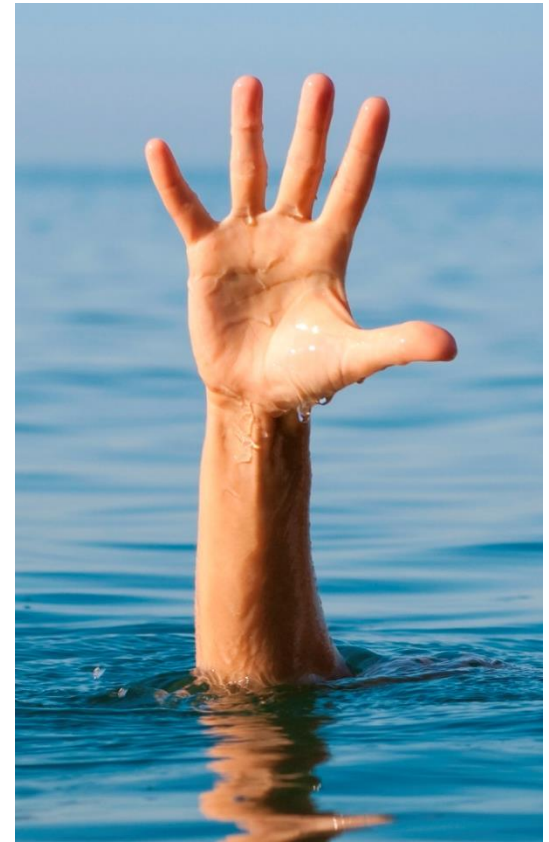
# Christianity and salvation

"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**" - Gen. 6:5





**"None is righteous, no, not one"** - Rom. 3:10-12

"God shows his love for us in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**" - Rom. 5:8

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ**—by grace you have been saved" - Eph. 2:4-5



# Christianity and contemporary critical theory are competing worldviews

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# Acknowledgements

Dr. Christina Shenvi



Dr. Pat Sawyer



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