Kenyon Gregory Jr

**Critical Race Theory takes center stage in America’s newest debate**

Since 2020, critical race theory has divided school boards and families; it examines America’s racial inequalities, a subject parents want their children to avoid.

         “Critical Race Theory is a term that has many definitions, but at its core, it’s about the racial inequalities in the systems in our country,” said Menah-Pratt Clarke, vice president of strategic affairs and vice provost of inclusion and diversity at Virginia Tech. “It is because of that keyword ‘race’ that is the driving point of the debate going on in this country because people—typically white people—do not want to talk about America’s past.”

         CRT, as it is often abbreviated, appeared in national headlines in 2020, as a result of the protests over the death of George Floyd. “His death really allowed activists and professors who have knowledge of critical race theory to come up into the forefront and urge people to understand how the systems of racism in this country affect one group and favor the other,” Clarke said.

         I believe that teaching CRT in the classroom would allow white students to learn how being non-white affects minorities in this country. “It all starts at school because if you think about it the only time some white students interact with minorities is at school,” Clarke said. In a perfect world, everybody would have a good relationship with each other, and racism would not be a part of everyday life; however, there is no such thing as a perfect world, but we can see examples of what it could be through diversity. Teaching CRT would provide ways for white students to learn about the racial systems and foundations in this country which would provide a means of educating themselves and in a sense become an ally for change.

However, teaching CRT begins with the teachers and according to a poll done by NBC News, 55% of teachers do not want to teach critical race theory in the classroom. Most teachers in this poll identified as being female, white and republican.

The Republican party has used CRT as a concept for political debate. Five republican states have already banned CRT from being taught in the classroom with 22 other state legislatures proposing limits to teaching CRT.

         “In the education system today, we see many factors playing a role in the curriculum that public schools are allowed to teach,” said Professor Susan Stinson, communication instructor at Virginia Tech. “Republican politicians are now pushing for parents to have a say in what their children learn in school and it’s those parents who do not want to expose their children to supposedly damaging and self-demoralizing ideas.”

         In the classroom, many teachers fear that they might have to censor their lessons in order to keep their jobs. According to a study done by educators at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, one in five teachers are scared that they might lose their job due to a student or parent complaining about the curriculum that they have to teach.

         “ Imagine telling a history teacher that he or she cannot adequately teach about the Trail of Tears or the Civil War or the Civil Rights Movement due to those events being tied to racism.” Stinson said.

Critics of CRT say it is a concept that attempts to rewrite American history and make white people guilty because of the advantages they have. However, in the public school system it is important for white students to have an understanding of what racism is and to mind their actions that contribute to it.

         I can relate to the experience because in the summer of 2020 one of my friends made a statement on social media concerning the death of George Floyd. The statement was “Black Lives Matter only when the murderer is white.” I was appalled and shocked because this was a friend who was cool with me and other Black students in high school. So, I started to ask myself, was this a fake post? Was he really my friend after all? To make a long story short, I cut ties with my so-called friend because the way we both looked at issues of race was completely different.

         CRT focuses on looking at racism as a part of everyday life, so people white or nonwhite—who do not intend to be racist can make choices that fuel racism. CRT puts an emphasis on the outcomes of the different conceptions of racism, not merely on individuals' beliefs, and it calls for those outcomes to be rectified and explained. When these outcomes are explained it gives everybody a chance to see how racism affects an individual or group or an entire race. This is especially true for white students to learn about so that they can see how racism affects people who do not look like them.

         Overall, if you think about it, white people invented racism, white people have upheld racism and white people have benefited from the systems that perpetuate racism. So, white people are responsible for tearing racism down. Teaching CRT in the classrooms could give a sense of change that this world so desperately needs.

Target Audience:

·         Parents

·         Who have children ages 15-18

·         Who live in the New River Valley