

## A review of “White Fragility” by Robin DiAngelo

**Book:** Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's so Hard for White People to talk about Racism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018)

### **Introduction**

Once in a while, a secular movement arises that threatens the church in an insidious ideological manner. The rise of critical race racism in America is deeply troubling, especially when professing Christians start promoting racism against other ethnic groups. Most troubling of all is they promote racism under the guise of being “antiracist,” promoting darkness in the name of light, hatred in the name of love. This highly divisive movement broods no opposition either, as it demands total submission of everyone to its ideology. The only thing in life that comes close to demanding total submission is religion, but in religion one at least has the divine who has the right to demand such obeisance, whereas in critical race theory who gave their proponents the right to demand such unquestioned fealty?

Such totalitarianism is extremely disturbing, and while it is easy to dismiss the movement due to the actions of its advocates, it is better to address the movement by what it clearly and unambiguously believe. In that light, I have decided to read the best-seller by Robin DiAngelo entitled *White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*, and review it accordingly. While this book is certainly not an academic book, it still gives us a clear glance into this troubling movement.

In this book, DiAngelo sets about describing a phenomenon which she terms “white fragility,” a phenomenon that she claims to have observed in whites, which impedes her work in addressing racism in America. Accordingly, DiAngelo sees white fragility as a big problem, and thus this whole book is written to deal with it. There is racism in America, DiAngelo’s job is to address racism, but when she tries to address racism, white fragility results in resistance to her message of healing (as she believes), and thus the process of addressing racism is interrupted.

If DiAngelo has properly diagnosed the situation, her frustration would be understandable, and this “white fragility” thing highly annoying. But has she? I would say not.

### **The definition of racism**

In dealing with the topic, the first thing that we have to look at is: What is racism? After all, “racism” is the problem that DiAngelo is attempting to address, so a proper understanding of this problem of racism is necessary. Here, we begin to observe the start of our problems with DiAngelo. According to her, racism is not “conscious dislike of people because of race” (p. 13). Rather, according to DiAngelo, racism is a system whereby racial prejudice is “backed by legal authority and institutional control” (p. 21). Thus, only

people in power (namely “whites”) can be racists. The problem with this definition is that this is not the definition of “racism” that is understood by most people. It is also not the dictionary definition, with Merriam-Webster defining racism as “a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race,” or “racial prejudice or discrimination.”<sup>1</sup> DiAngelo’s definition of racism is therefore not true to the dictionary definition and the commonsense meaning of the term. Within the Critical Race ghetto it seems, DiAngelo’s new definition of “racism” has come into being and now the demand is made that everyone must use this new meaning, or be accused of “racism.”

The problem is that words have meaning, and thus one is not free to change the meaning of any word for no reason whatsoever. Sure, word meanings do change over time, but such shifts in semantics is a natural historical artifact, not something imposed from the outside. In order for communication to happen, both parties must have the same referent when the same word is being used. While Critical Race Theory (CRT) might need a term to have this meaning of “system of racial prejudice backed by legal authority and institutional control,” it has no right to take a common term, redefine it, and then demand that everyone is to accept this new definition of the term.

This shenanigan is particular odious because the word redefined is one perceived with moral revulsion. Thus, to use that word in its new meaning, and apply it to people, is to charge those labeled as being reprehensible people. It does not matter that DiAngelo claims that “being good or bad is not relevant” (p. 142) The negative connotations of that term stays regardless.

As an example of why CRT’s redefinition of the term is morally reprehensible, let us see how this redefinition strategy works when applied to another term. Let us use the term “Nazi,” and define “Nazi” as “anyone who believes in CRT.” Thus, with this new “definition,” DiAngelo is a Nazi. Would DiAngelo accept this charge as a valid charge? I doubt so.

## **Racism and Kafkatrapping**

For DiAngelo, racism is always present, and thus there is no such thing as no racism. The question for DiAngelo is *how* racism is present, not *if* it is present. If racism is denied, then the denial itself shows racism present in the individual.

Such accusations of racism are categorized as Kafkatraps.<sup>2</sup> Admit racism, and racism is present. Deny racism, and the denial is proof of racism. Kafkatraps are non-falsifiable in every way. The closest to any proof of CRT is inequality of outcome between different ethnic groups. However, does inequality of outcome prove racial discrimination of any kind? Not necessarily. Two people with the same salary can have different amounts of

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<sup>1</sup> “Racism,” *Merriam-Webster*. Accessed Sept 2, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism>

<sup>2</sup> “Kafkatrap,” *Wiktionary*. Accessed Sept 3, 2020, <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Kafkatrap>

money in the bank, due to the fact that person A save most of his salary while person B spends most of his. Is there “discrimination” against person B just because he has less savings in his bank? Of course not! The fact of the matter is that inequality of income tell us nothing whatsoever about why there is such disparity. Therefore, inequality of outcome between ethnic groups on any issue does not **by itself** tell us anything about whether there is or is not racial discrimination.<sup>3</sup>

DiAngelo’s assertion therefore is just that: an assertion. She can cite all the “scholars” she wants, but unless there is proof for any part of this radical theory she believes in, CRT is a myth and a fraud. Without proof, her theory is no different from belief in the tooth fairy, or a flat earth, or Nazism.

So “how” is racism present? My response to such a question is: how is “how racism is present” present? Until and unless these CRT “scholars” can furnish real proof (rational or empirical) that makes their theory even remotely plausible, nobody has to believe in anything they say.

### **The problem with “white fragility”**

This brings us to the issue of “white fragility,” where, for white people

The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable—the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses. These include emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation. These responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy. (p. 2)

Are some whites unable to deal with criticism? Sure. But is DiAngelo’s criticism justified? No. As mentioned, her redefinition of an odious and offensive term which she then uses to label all whites is wrong and certain to cause offence. It is understandable, even expected, that whites will react angrily to such unfounded accusations. Secondly, her theory has not been proven except through Kafkatrapping, and thus why she would expect anyone to be converted to her religion of CRT upon accusation of racism is puzzling.

“White fragility,” when understood without ideological import, is the natural outrage of whites to false and heinous accusations from a stranger against their characters. DiAngelo’s characterization of “white fragility” is her analysis of behavior according to the worldview of CRT, and not from interviews with those who have expressed such behavior. The fact that the main thesis of the book has no empirical (or rational) backing once again proves that CRT is not scientific and not knowledge at all.

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<sup>3</sup> Besides this, arguing from the outcome to the cause is the logical fallacy of affirming the consequent.

## **Racial grievance and affirmative action**

Lastly, I would like to say a few words about the supposed feelings of racism and oppression claimed by blacks that DiAngelo narrates. The first thing is that just because someone feels slighted by racism does not mean that racism is present. If I feel racially discriminated against because I applied for a job and a Hispanic person got the job, does my feeling of being racially discriminated against means that racism is present? Of course not! Feelings are not facts. But if CRT proponents dispute that, let me ask: if I feel racially insulted by DiAngelo, do my feelings prove that DiAngelo is a racist against me?

Feelings of so-called BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) are just that: feelings. I say this as a non-white myself. If any of these “racial minorities” feel slighted, the proper way to address the issue is to first examine if their feelings are justified, instead of insisting that everyone kowtow to their feelings. The increased feelings of racial discrimination comes about due to the racial grievance industry, and sadly, many people are affected by the lies they spew.

The real problem in America is CRT and the entire racial grievance industry, and the liberal bigotry of low expectations seen in affirmative action. White progressives are indeed at fault, but not for the reasons given by DiAngelo. They are at fault for destroying black lives through affirmative action and weaponizing race as a weapon against their main enemy: white conservatives. The only difference between the old guard and the new guard of white progressivism is that the new guard holds to CRT while the old guard retained the older liberalism while being more interested in penance for injustices instead of true reform. DiAngelo’s book against “whiteness” therefore is part of the ongoing civil war between the old guard and the new guard of progressivism, a war where both sides attack conservatives even as they fight among themselves.

It is illuminating here to see DiAngelo denounce the celebration of diversity in “Multicultural Authors Week” and “Black History Month,” separate from mainstream literature (pp. 56-7). Who were the ones who were for ethnic studies of various kinds but the older liberal progressives! Full racial equality means that the excellent works of authors from all races and ethnicities would be integrated into a single humanities curriculum, and thus this problem highlighted by DiAngelo of racial tokenism would be solved. This is where color-blindness when properly implemented would resolve an issue that the older liberal progressivism had created. DiAngelo of course does not read this as an indictment of affirmative action but as proof of racism, yet another example of how having a false worldview leads one away from true evidence.

Racial grievances can be due to true discrimination, or a false sense of discrimination. Where there is true discrimination, it is likely due to liberal progressive policies. After all, when one is condescended to and given entrance to Ivy League colleges with lower grades than others, is it any wonder that resentment can build up in the recipient of such a bigoted act of low expectation? When such a one does well, he would wonder whether

those praising him is doing so out of condescension, or whether the praise is indeed genuine.

## **Conclusion**

Racism is wrong, and writing and working against racism is to be lauded. It is with this in mind that DiAngelo's book is reviewed, and it has been found wanting. DiAngelo redefines "racism," engages in Kafkatrapping, and deals in speculation apart from doing actual social science research when coming up with her phrase "white fragility." Being steeped in the myth of CRT, her work has nothing to do with actually combatting racism, but rather it is steeped in racism. The negative reaction of many whites to her "work" is the fruit of her real racist words and actions, a racism originated from within the toxic stew of CRT.

Due to the nature of the subject matter, I will say that this book and its contents are to be rejected as dangerous to society. Despite DiAngelo's outward sincerity, the contents of this book are a pack of very dangerous lies, on the level of *Mein Kampf*. There is nothing redeemable in the book, except as a note indicating the rise of critical race racism in certain portions of American society, and from them, to the rest of the world.