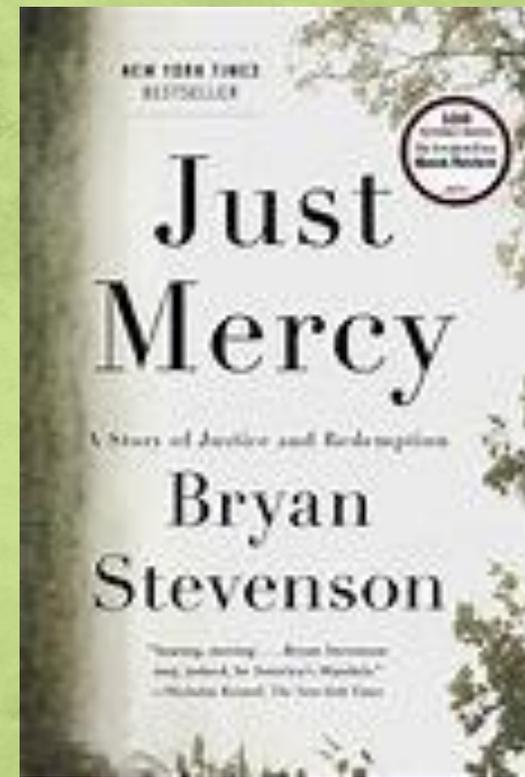


Welcome to the Just Mercy

Summer Grace Group

Sixth Session



Linda Hitchens and Ed Bryant

Opening Prayer

Course Structure and Plan

- Lessons based upon the book but will reference the movie
- Lessons
 - Introduction – Chapter 3 June 3
 - Chapter 4 – Chapter 6 June 17
 - Chapter 7 – Chapter 10 July 1
 - Chapter 11 – Chapter 13 July 15
 - Chapter 14 – 16 and Epilogue July 29
 - Final session August 12
 - Critical Race Theory
 - The Importance of Music to African Americans
 - Additional Requests from the Discussion Group

The Importance of Music in the Lives of African Americans

- The History of Black Music
 - History of Black Music – video
- Lectures by Philip Spiess
 - Adult education course “Spirituals”
 - “African American Music in Cincinnati” (part of an 8-part series on Cincinnati’s African-American History)
- Introduction of Our Special Guest
Jameece D. Pinckney



Discussion Topics

- Have you ever used music as a way of dealing with the challenges of life?
- How has music changed our society?

Critical Race Theory – Its Origins

- Coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s
- Term first emerged as a challenge to the idea that the United States had become a “color-blind” society where one’s racial identity no longer had an effect on one’s social or economic status
- The beginnings of the attacks on affirmative action policies with conservative politicians arguing that they were no longer needed
- Highlights the ways that supposedly color-blind laws have allowed racial oppression and inequality to continue despite the outlawing of segregation
- Arguments among legal scholars that racism and white supremacy were defining elements of the American legal system despite language related to “equal protection.”
- The fight against oppression of people of color was a major goal; they sought to change the status quo, not just critique it
- Interdisciplinary, drawing on a wide range of scholarly ideologies including feminism, Marxism, and postmodernism
- Other early important figures – Derrick Bell (the forefather of CRT), Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado

Critical Race Theory – Definition

Critical race theory (CRT) is a body of legal scholarship and an academic movement of civil rights scholars and activists in the United States who seek to critically examine the intersection of race and U.S. law and to challenge mainstream American liberal approaches to racial justice.

Critical race theory is an academic framework centered on the idea that racism is systemic, and not just demonstrated by individual people with prejudices. The theory holds that racial inequality is woven into legal systems and negatively affects people of color in their schools, doctors' offices, the criminal justice system and countless other parts of life.

Critical Race Theory – What Is It?

- Examines social, cultural, and legal issues as they relate to race and racism
- A lens or approach to understanding the role of race in American society
- An academic discipline composed of civil rights scholars in the United States who seek to critically examine the law
 - To show that it maintains white supremacy, white power, and enforces societal or structural racism
 - To show that transforming the relationship between law and racial power, and also achieving racial emancipation and anti-subordination, is possible
- Challenges the claims that the legal system is neutral to race
- Examines how the law intersects with issues of race and challenges mainstream liberal approaches to racial justice
- Meant to emphasize the effects of race on one's social standing

Critical Race Theory – What Is It? (continued)

- Three main components
 - Observing multiple viewpoints and voices in order to understand America. Looking at bias in systems, practices and policies. The war on drugs, for example, disproportionately incarcerated young Black men.
 - Working to make those systems and practices equitable
- Many people want to reduce racism to individuals
 - CRT does not look at the behavior of individuals
 - It does not analyze bias in specific people or event
 - It analyzes bias in processes
 - Three main components
 - Observing multiple viewpoints and voices in order to understand America. Looking at bias in systems, practices and policies. The war on drugs, for example, disproportionately incarcerated young Black men.
 - Working to make those systems and practices equitable.
- An evolving and malleable practice

Critical Race Theory – What Is It? (continued)

- Critiques how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuate a racial caste system that relegates people of color to the bottom tiers.
- Race intersects with other identities, including sexuality, gender identity, and others.
- Recognizes that racism is not a bygone relic of the past.
- Critiques how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuate a racial caste system that relegates people of color to the bottom tiers.
- Race intersects with other identities, including sexuality, gender identity, and others.
- Challenges the idea that in the decades since the Civil Rights Movement and associated legislation, racial inequality had been solved and affirmative action was no longer necessary

Critical Race Theory – What Is It? (continued)

- An influential body of legal and academic literature that has made its way into more public, non-academic writing.
- CRT is merely one account of how racism has operated in American society.
- A Presbyterian viewpoint
 - “Eat the meat and spit out the bones” approach
 - Learn what one can from it while rejecting what is wrong
 - An attempt to give an account of the historic phenomena of racism in America and the vestiges of how racism may linger in how we treat our neighbors and how institutions may operate today
 - Not an account we must accept or reject wholesale

Critical Race Theory – What It Is Not

- Discussions now in common dialogue are problematic because we have "non experts" on both sides trying to lead discussions without having studied CRT or having an understanding of its background and use
- A kind of villain--a campaign to exploit white anxiety about race
- A form of "race-based Marxism" and in K-12 schools, a "form of state-sanctioned racism"
- Many institutions have given more attention to race, including perhaps in K-12 curriculum. But efforts to include the viewpoints of different races in history lessons are not necessarily CRT – that's just telling American history .

Discussion Topics

- The notion that race is a social construct essentially means that race has no scientific basis or biological reality
- Why is there so much opposition to the Critical Race Theory?
- What do you think of the Presbyterian/Resurrection viewpoint?

Where Do We Go From Here?

- *Love Is a Habit* – from the children’s message
- *Repairing Our Relational Infrastructure: Love* – Rev. Dr. Ben Trawick, Grace Presbyterian Church sermon from July 11, 2021
- The Importance of Being Educated
- Be a Stonecatcher
- Changes in the prison system – reform
- Coming out of prison and being able to carry on
- Fairfax County one-on-one support

Additional Discussion Requests from Our Group

Words to Remember

Loving what God loves, participating in God's passion for a different kind of world, includes becoming passionate about God's dream: a world of fairness in which everybody has enough of the material basis of existence and in which there is no violence and war. Utopian? Yes. Impossible to achieve? In its fullness, probably. But can there be greater approximations of it? Yes. Only the privileged who wish to defend their privilege or the victimized who have given up on anything really changing and resigned themselves to their fate might say "no." But for Christians who take the Bible and Jesus seriously, it is the only world worth dreaming about—and striving toward. Loving God means participating in God's passion for that kind of world.

Marcus J. Borg

Convictions – How I Learned What Matters Most

More Words to Remember

That's what I'm trying to get at, is that we live, and then we die. And I think it was Toni Morrison who once said that that might be the point of it all; *[laughs]* that there is something about the fact that we are mortal, that there is a definite beginning, middle, and end to the arc of our lives that is at once — I think the word that I want to use is “humbling,” but it also frees up so much. It does allow us to have this generational view that, like, well, I'm here, and one day, I'm not going to be here, *[laughs]* and so I can do what I can do during this time, and at the same time, I can pass on that which came to me as seed, as blossom, and let somebody else plant it and tend to it. And that is so freeing. And if I could go back and talk to a younger version of myself, I would say, “It's OK to not build the whole house. It's OK to lay a foundation and be satisfied in that.”

Rev. Jen Bailey

What We Inherit & What We Send Forth

Resources and References

- **Primary Resources**

- **Just Mercy** – the movie, available on Prime Video and YouTube
- **Opinion:** When it comes to knowing U.S. history, we should all be 'woke' (an article from the Washington Post):
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/05/27/american-history-we-should-all-be-woke/>
- **13th - A Documentary** by Ava Duvernay
- **Repairing Our Relational Infrastructure: Love** – Rev. Dr. Ben Trawick, Grace Presbyterian Church sermon from July 11, 2021
- **The History of Black Music** – [History of Black Music - Bing video](#)

Resources and References (continued)

- Added recommended reference materials
 - **Michigan Journal of Race and Law, Volume 25, 2020**
Man's Best Friend? How Dogs Have Been Used to Oppress African Americans
 - **The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism** by Jemar Tisby
 - **So You Want to Talk About Race** by Ijeoma Oluo
 - **A Lesson on Critical Race Theory**
Janel George, American Bar Association, 11 January 2021
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/a-lesson-on-critical-race-theory/
 - **Critical Race Theory: What Is It, really?**
Madeline Mitchell, Cincinnati Enquirer, 25 July 2021
<https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2021/07/25/critical-race-theory-definition-meaning-education/8026552002/>
 - **What Is Critical Race Theory and Why Is It Under Attack**
Stephen Sawchuk, 18 May 2021
<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/what-is-critical-race-theory-and-why-is-it-under-attack/2021/05>

Resources and References (continued)

- Added recommended reference materials
 - **Critical Race Theory Isn't a Threat for Presbyterians**
Anthony Bradley, 3 February 2021
<https://mereorthodoxy.com/critical-race-theory-presbyterian-church-in-america/>
 - ***Black Song: The Forge and the Flame: The Story of How the African-American Spiritual Was Hammered Out***
Lovell, John, Jr.
(New York: The Macmillan Co., 1972; 686 pp.).
 - ***The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation***
Cone, James H.
(New York: The Seabury Press, 1972; Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1992; 141 pp.).