

Critical Race Theory Town Hall Meeting
Thursday, February 21, 2022 – 1:45 PM

Notes from the discussion

Attendance: Fifty-eight (58) representative senators, faculty, and administrators

Guests: Molefi Kete Asante, Professor and Chair of Africology and African American Studies Department and Shanda Sibley, Assistant Clinical Professor of Law, Sheller Center for Social Justice

1. Call to Order

Past-President Rafael Porrata-Doria called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM

(President Williams-Witherspoon unable to join at start of meeting due to technical difficulties)

2. Guests:

Molefi Kete Asante, Professor and Chair of Africology and African American Studies Department and Shanda Sibley, Assistant Clinical Professor of Law, Sheller Center for Social Justice

Town hall discussion on Critical Race Theory (CRT) – An overview of the issues

Professor Asante: CRT has become an issue in education and the academy. It has become confused with race theory or racism. But it always has been an analysis tool developed in law school circles.

The idea of permanence of racism within the social fabric of political ideology of the country; an idea of social construct but believes it is ultimately a cultural construct. The real problem in America has to do with policies established, by customs and legislation that in effect creates inequities and inequalities throughout society. CRT is, in a reflective sense, a way to assess what the power structure has done and how it has done it.

The Heritage Foundation attributed a list of issues to CRT including, Black Lives Matter protest, LGBTQ clubs, diversity training and the recent ethnic studies model curriculum in California and the free speech debate on college campuses. The conclusion of the Heritage Foundation was that they said it is destructive.

What has occurred is concern on the parts of some people as a criticism of white people, power structures and the system. Asante gave some examples of the idea of the effects of the structure/policy.

CRT is not yet a synonym for ethnic studies in the minds of the republic. We can see it coming. The race paradigm is dead so only will it move forward as being human being. Being human being is the best way to transform the race discourse.

Professor Sibley asserts that Critical Race Theory is a lens that legal scholars developed to look at institutions. It argues that one can see forces of racism embedded in laws and regulations and rules and procedures. And it can be seen at many levels, in government, private institutions, informal systems, and policies.

What CRT does NOT do: it does not claim that white people or any people are inherently racist. It doesn't claim that any race of people is inherently superior or inferior to any other race of people. It is not diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). DEI is more about how we treat one another on an individual level. Hence, DEI is more about human resources; how we interact in spaces. CRT is not DEI. CRT is not

history. It is looking at the law critically when thinking about racial disparities and differences and outcomes.

Williams-Witherspoon stated that part of the reason for the town hall is because many are confused about it and why institutions should even be concerned about what is happening in the body public.

Research conducted by Northwestern, Harvard, Rutgers, and Covert States Project polled 19,000 people on the subject. Seven out of 10 individuals had no idea what it was but were willing to have legislation action restricting how history and racism can be taught in public schools and what does that mean for institutions of higher learning like Temple University.

Asante wanted to make another important comment: this debate is not based in reality. Any time the issue is raised about African Americans, and inequalities, it creates the same reaction. The real issue at the heart of the matter; anything that seems critical of white culture is a problem. Criticism of what white people have done is not against them but factual events. It is a criticism of a system that has created systems of power that has privileged some and oppressed others.

What followed was a vigorous in-depth discussion and Q and A for the rest of the meeting.

To hear the full discussion, click the link below

February 21, 2022 - Representative Faculty Senate Meeting - CRT Town Hall. Guests: Molefi Kete Asante, Africology & African American Studies and Shanda Sibley, Beasley School of Law [*recording no longer available*].

President Williams-Witherspoon thanked the panelists and the attendees for a “rigorous and robust” discussion of the issues.

3. Adjournment

The town hall adjourned at 3:14 pm.

Submitted by

Cheryl Mack

Senate Admin. Coord.