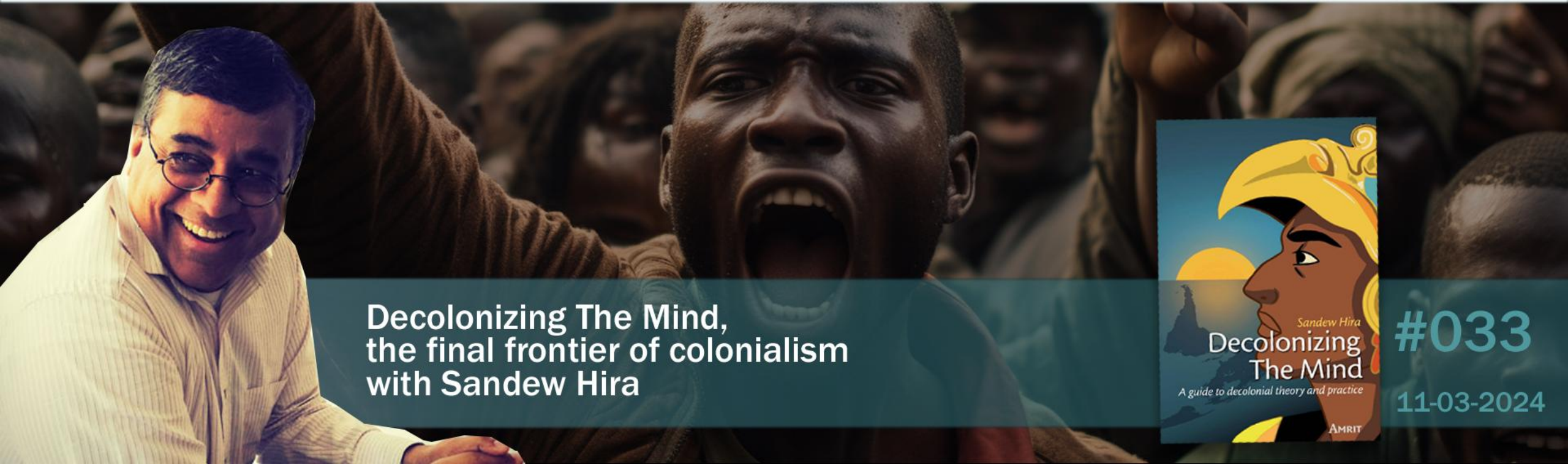


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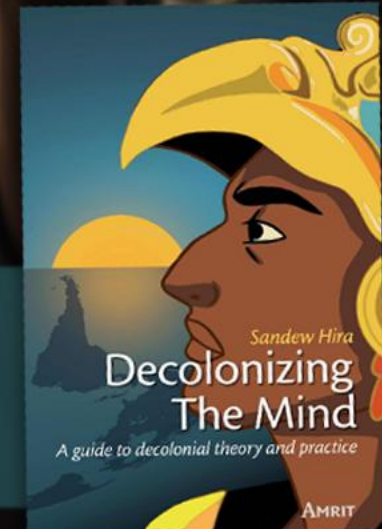
What is decolonial theory?

The background, nature, strength and weaknesses of decolonial theory and practice

Other theories of racism



Decolonizing The Mind,
the final frontier of colonialism
with Sandew Hira



#033

11-03-2024

Topics

- ❑ Superiority/inferiority in non-Western cultures
- ❑ Liberal theories of racism
- ❑ Marxist theory of racism

Superiority/inferiority in non-Western cultures

- ❑ India: the caste system
- ❑ China: the barbarians

India and the caste system

- Oliver Cox: *“A caste may be defined as an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank of social esteem in comparison with other such subdivisions.”*
- Four elements:
 1. 1. A caste is an ethnic group with common cultural or physical traits.
 2. 2. A caste occupies a position of superiority or inferiority in a social system in comparison with other castes in that system.
 3. 3. A caste is endogamous: marriage is only allowed within the ethnic group.
 4. 4. A caste is hereditary: the social position of individuals is inherited from the social position of their parents.
- 4,000 castes and subcastes. Main castes: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (soldiers), Vaishyas (traders) and Shudras (servants).

Description of lower cast life: Arundhati Roy

“Each region of India has lovingly perfected its own unique version of caste-based cruelty, based on an unwritten code that is much worse than the Jim Crow laws. In addition to being forced to live in segregated settlements, Untouchables were not allowed to use the public roads that privileged castes used, they were not allowed to drink from common wells, they were not allowed into Hindu temples, they were not allowed into privileged-caste schools, they were not permitted to cover their upper bodies, they were only allowed to wear certain kinds of clothes and certain kinds of jewellery. Some castes, like the Mahars, the caste to which Ambedkar belonged, had to tie brooms to their waists to sweep away their polluted footprints, others had to hang spittoons around their necks to collect their polluted saliva. Men of the privileged castes had undisputed rights over the bodies of Untouchable women. Love is polluting. Rape is pure.”

The British caste system in India: Colonialism was based on caste

Shashi Tharoor: *“The British in India created little islands of Englishness, planting ferns and roses and giving their cottages nostalgia-suffused names like Grasmere Lodge (in Ooty) and Willowdale (in Darjeeling). By the early nineteenth century, the British had established themselves as a ruling caste, but at the top of the heap: they did not intermarry or inter-dine with the ‘lower’ castes, in other words, the Indians; they lived in bungalows in their own areas, known as cantonments and ‘civil lines’, separated from the ‘Black Towns’ where the locals lived; they kept to their clubs, to which Indians were not admitted; their loyalties remained wedded to their faraway homeland; their children were shipped off to the British public-school system and did not mingle with the ‘natives’; their clothes and purchases came from Britain, as did their books and ideas. At the end of their careers in India, for the most part, they returned ‘home’.”*

India's policy of affirmative action after 1947

- ❑ 50% of all government-run higher education admissions and government job vacancies may be reserved for members of the lower castes.
- ❑ Legal provisions for programs for preferential treatment.
- ❑ Changing the psychology is a different ball game

China and barbarians

The unification of China under the Qin Dynasty in 221 BCE brought different ethnic groups together. Some ethnic Chinese tended to feel culturally superior to non-Chinese “barbarians”, while North Chinese tended to regard even South Chinese as barbarians.

A thousand years later, Chinese scholars exhibited notions of superiority/inferiority but not because they were rulers, but because they were ruled! The Mongols invaded China between 1205-1272 and established a unitary state, after a period of disintegration of competing states. The Mongols were the rulers and incorporated Chinese officials into their administration. But some Chinese philosophers resented the foreign occupation and articulated their critique in terms of how an inferior ethnic group ruled a superior ethnic group.

Comparison with Western racism

Pre-colonial civilizations had a wide variety of concepts that combined superiority and inferiority to ethnicity. A superficial comparison with Western colonialism might lead one to conclude that racism in the Western world is not different from racism in the non-Western world, because concepts of superiority and inferiority had been linked to ethnicity. But racism was developed in the West in a totally different context: the rise of an integrated global civilization in which all previous civilizations were overtaken, wiped out or subjugated. Elements of superiority/inferiority from the old civilizations might have combined with new notions of superiority and inferiority because of the dominating influence of the West. The organization of racist knowledge production and dissemination has developed on an unprecedented scale leading to such a conformity that it does not matter whether you study in Nairobi or London; you are taught the same concepts. Technology has created a media infrastructure in such a way that the manipulation of the mind is done on a scale that mankind has not witnessed before in history.

Liberal theories of racism

The liberal theories of racism are rooted in a common approach that centres the individual in the analysis of racism. In psychological theories racism is about the perceptions and behavior of individuals, mostly of the racist who is inhibited with prejudices. Studies on racism and the Holocaust focus on how personalities are formed in their psychological constitution. Theories of white privilege, everyday racism, intersectionality, and critical race take individual experiences as the basis for their analysis.

The historical connection of racism and colonialism in its three forms (theological, biological and cultural racism) is absent in their analyses. The epistemology of Western Enlightenment that laid the theoretical foundation of racism is not part of their theory.

The psychological approach: the concept of prejudice

Prejudice: *“an opinion about an individual, group, or phenomenon that is developed without proof or systematic evidence. The prejudgment may be favourable but is more often unfavourable and may become institutionalized in the form of a country’s laws or customs.”*

Racism: *“stereotyping and generalizing about people, usually negatively, because of their race; commonly a basis of discrimination against members of racial groups”.*

Negative stereotyping is seen as the cause of racist behavior. The assumption is that all people are born with a mind that serves as a blank slate (Tabula Rasa) that is filled with ideas and perceptions through experience and education. Racism is combated by giving the right information so that opinions and thus behavior is based on “correct” information. And “correct” information is information that proves that prejudices are wrong. A rational person would then cast away racist opinions and change his or her behavior.

Critique of the psychological approach

- ❑ Empirical validation proves it wrong: how do you explain the European enslavement of Africans. The image of Africans before was positive in Europe. Why did it change? Psychologists cannot answer this question.
- ❑ The solution of providing correct information has been given. Why does it not work?

The personality approach

- ❑ Adorno F-scale
- ❑ Milgram experiment
- ❑ Goldhagen Hitler's willing executioners

Theodoro Adorno: Authoritarian Personality

Adorno was concerned with fascism and anti-Semitism because of Nazism and the Holocaust. He argued that *“the political, economic, and social convictions of an individual often form a broad and coherent pattern, as if bound together by a ‘mentality’ or ‘spirit’, and that this pattern is an expression of deep-lying trends in his personality.”* There is a certain type of individual who is prone to becoming a fascist. Adorno says: *“The major concern was with the potentially fascist individual, one whose structure is such as to render him particularly susceptible to antidemocratic propaganda.”*

F-scale

Adorno and his team conducted interviews with over 2,000 persons to construct a typology of the Authoritarian Personality. He concluded that childhood experiences led to the construction of a certain type of personality that makes one person more than the other vulnerable for fascist propaganda. He constructed an F-scale (F stands for fascist) that tells how vulnerable a person is based on nine traits. A certain type of personality makes it easier for an individual to become a fascist.

Critique of Adorno

- ❑ Empirical validation: European enslavement of Africans
- ❑ Apartheid in the USA where Adorno lived after fleeing Nazi Germany: he never applied his theory to the USA

1961: Milgram experiment USA

Test the willingness of people to obey authority. Participants were instructed by a teacher to administer electric shocks to a learner who had to give answers to a teacher. If the answer was wrong, the participant would press a button that gave the learner an electric shock, which was fake, but the participant did not know that. The voltage was increased as the number of wrong answers increased.

Conclusion: "Each individual possesses a conscience which to a greater or lesser degree serves to restrain the unimpeded flow of impulses destructive to others. But when he merges his person into an organizational structure, a new creature replaces autonomous man, unhindered by the limitations of individual morality, freed of human inhibition, mindful only of the sanctions of authority."

The personality of an individual is molded by the organizational structure in which it functions. And authority in such a system can lead to a person doing something against his or her own conscience.

Critique of Stanley Milgram

- ❑ Empirical validation: European enslavement of Africans
- ❑ Those who started enslavement of Africans were in position of authority

Daniel Goldhagen (1996): Hitler's Willing Executioners

No peer pressure: *“The evidence that no German was ever killed or incarcerated for having refused to kill Jews is conclusive.”* Conclusion: *“A demonological antisemitism, of the virulent racial variety, was the common structure of the perpetrators’ cognition and of German society in general. The German perpetrators, in this view, were assenting mass executioners, men and women who, true to their own eliminationist antisemitic beliefs, faithful to their cultural antisemitic credo, considered the slaughter to be just.”* The personality that developed in Germany was the result of a culture of anti-Semitism that had existed for a long time.

Critique of Goldhagen

- ❑ His theory is not a general theory
- ❑ Empirical validation: European enslavement of Africans did not come from racism, it was vice versa
- ❑ Anti-semitism existed in other European countries without faciscm

Peggy McIntosch (USA, 1988): white privilege

Looking at gender: "I have often noticed men's unwillingness to grant that they are overprivileged in the curriculum, even though they may grant that women are disadvantaged. Denials that amount to taboos surround the subject of advantages that men gain from women's disadvantages. These denials protect male privilege from being fully recognized, acknowledged, lessened, or ended."

Extend gender to race: "I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege."

How racist oppression, exploitation and injustice of people of color are turned into a privilege of white people

1. Change the origin of racism as a phenomenon that is historically rooted in colonialism into an occurrence whose origin is unclear and invisible.
2. Replace oppression, exploitation and injustice by “unearned assets”.
3. Individualize racism. This enables you to distance yourself from your white community and claim the willingness to give up white privilege.
4. Remove the distinction between perpetrator and victim of a crime: *“At school, we were not taught about slavery in any depth; we were not taught to see slaveholders as damaged people. Slaves were seen as the only group at risk of being dehumanized.”*

Critique of white privilege

- ❑ It is an insult for colonized people to turn oppression, exploitation and injustice of people of color into a privilege of white people, because it lacks any historical dimension
- ❑ Perpetrators and victims of colonialism are placed on the same level: damaged people
- ❑ It blocks the analysis of institutional racism and reduces policies of change to individual behavior: no question of institutional changes

Philomena Essed (1984): the theory of everyday racism

- ❑ *“Many studies have identified the mechanisms of racism at a societal level, but **few** have revealed its pervasive impact on the daily experiences of Blacks.”*
- ❑ She is unaware of all the studies by major black thinkers that have dealt extensively with how racism has impacted the daily lives of black people: Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and the National of Islam, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire.
- ❑ Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Charles Hamilton take this as a starting point in their theory of institutional racism and the definition of racism: (my emphasis in bold): “What is racism? The word has represented **daily** reality to millions of black people for centuries, yet it is rarely defined—perhaps just because that reality has been such a commonplace.”

The claim of a general theory of racism

- *“The central place of experience in my approach to racism suggests an agenda for another kind of research... It is my aim to demonstrate that the concept of everyday racism has a more general relevance in race relations theory. I presents a new approach to the study of racism based on the concept of ‘everyday racism’.”*
- *“Individuals are actors in a power structure. Power can be used to reproduce racism, but it can also be used to combat racism. This study shows how power, operative in everyday situations, perpetuates racial and ethnic oppression.”*

A critique of everyday racism

- ❑ Which racism is not everyday but only in the weekend?
- ❑ It is historically incorrect:
 - ❑ *"The majority of the colonized population has little or no experience with whites on a level of day-to-day interaction."*
 - ❑ *"The colonizers present themselves as a positive identification model and ignore the relation between colonialism and racism."*
- ❑ Policy implication: it is about human interaction instead of institutions

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989): theory of intersectionality: seven propositions - 1

1. visualization of the concept of intersection: *“Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group tries to navigate the main crossing in the city. The main highway is 'racism road'. One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street. She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression.”*
2. The acknowledgement of multiple oppression: *“Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. Thus, for feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse to embrace the experiences and concerns of Black women, the entire framework that has been used as a basis for translating ‘women’s experience’ or ‘the Black experience’ into concrete policy demands must be rethought and recast.”*

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989): theory of intersectionality: seven propositions - 2

3. The critique of white feminism by black feminists: *“The value of feminist theory to Black women is diminished because it evolves from a white racial context that is seldom acknowledged. Not only are women of color in fact overlooked, but their exclusion is reinforced when white women speak for and as women... When feminist theory attempts to describe women’s experiences through analyzing patriarchy, sexuality, or separate spheres ideology, it often overlooks the role of race.”*
4. A critique of black males by black feminists. Crenshaw refers to Anna Julia Cooper, a 19th-century Black feminist: *“Cooper often criticized Black leaders and spokespersons for claiming to speak for the race, but failing to speak for Black women. Referring to one of Martin Delaney’s public claims that where he was allowed to enter, the race entered with him, Cooper countered: “Only the Black Woman can say, when and where I enter ... then and there the whole Negro race enters with me.”*

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989): theory of intersectionality: seven propositions - 3

5. The solution: *“If any real efforts are to be made to free Black people of the constraints and conditions that characterize racial subordination, then theories and strategies purporting to reflect the Black community’s needs must include an analysis of sexism and patriarchy. Similarly, feminism must include an analysis of race if it hopes to express the aspirations of non-white women.”*
6. The extension of intersectionality beyond the experiences of black women to other marginalized groups: *“It seems that placing those who currently are marginalized in the centre is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and undermine potential collective action. The goal of this activity should be to facilitate the inclusion of marginalized groups for whom it can be said: 'When they enter, we all enter.'”*

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989): theory of intersectionality: seven propositions - 7

7. The critique of identity politics: *“The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite- that it frequently conflates or ignores intra group differences. In the context of violence against women, this elision of difference is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. Moreover, ignoring differences within groups frequently contributes to tension among groups, another problem of identity politics that frustrates efforts to politicize violence against women. And so, when the practices expound identity as 'woman' or 'person of color' as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling.”*

Six points of critique of DTM - 1

1. Racism is institutional, not individual. The concept of intersection just does not fit an analysis of oppression of communities. In the theory of intersection, a black community can be positioned on the “racism road” but that road cannot intersect with the “patriarchy road” because patriarchy is not about the experience of the black community as a whole.
2. The understanding of the powers that benefit from and sustain oppression. During slavery white women had the power to sell black men and women as cattle. It would be absurd to argue that black women are on the racism road and intersect the experience of white women on the patriarchy road. Patriarchy in the white world is totally different from patriarchy in the world of the enslaved.

Six points of critique of DTM - 2

3. Intersectionality levels all oppressions. One experience cannot be valued higher or lower than another experience of oppression. In the case of enslavement, the patriarchal oppression of black women is not different from the patriarchal oppression of white women. Is a white woman with the power to sell a black man or woman on the same road of patriarchy as the black woman? This is clearly ridiculous.
4. The incorporation of western concepts into the theory of intersectionality. The concept of patriarchy is a western concept that looks at the relationship between men and women only through one lens: the lens of male domination and oppression of women. This perspective reduces human relations to a relation between subjects that are in struggle with each other. Undoubtedly, there is struggle and oppression. But in decolonial theory we acknowledge another dimension in the relationship between men and women and that is love. Love is expressed in stories, songs and all forms of art.

Six points of critique of DTM - 3

5. The lack of acknowledgement of the idea that the liberation in one road of the intersection can be used to oppress individuals on another road. In the West women's liberation and LGBTQ+ liberation are used in an imperial narrative of Islamophobia to characterize and demonize Muslim communities in the world.
6. The erosion of the concept of solidarity. Intersectionality defines solidarity with the struggle of other oppressed on the basis of the intersection of oppression of individuals. What is the theoretical basis for solidarity with oppressed nations? None. What is the basis of the solidarity with the Palestinian people against apartheid in their occupied land on the basis of the theory of intersectionality? None, because there is no intersection of individuals. It is the struggle of an oppressed nation. Ethnic cleansing and genocide goes way beyond the experience of the individual.

Critical Race Theory (CRT): six propositions - 1

1. *“Racism is ordinary, not aberrational – ‘normal science’, the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country.”* CRT talks to white people who might think that there is no racism because apartheid has been abolished in the US and black people with a colonized mind who believe these white people.
2. It is difficult to eradicate racism: *“because racism advances the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it.”*

Critical Race Theory (CRT): six propositions - 2

3. *“Race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient.”* This is a response to racist scholars who argue there are biological differences between human beings that lead to different social positions.
4. *“The dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market.”* This addresses the notion that racism is not only about blacks, but also about other groups, for example Asians – who are racialized.

Critical Race Theory (CRT): six propositions - 3

5. *“The notion of intersectionality and anti-essentialism. No person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity. Everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances.”* Intersectionality is a brand of CRT.
6. *“The notion of a unique voice of color. Because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, black, Indian, Asian, and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know. Minority status, in other words, brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism.”*

Four points of critique of DTM - 1

1. The conceptualization is still around individuals. Identity is constructed (see the fifth element above) around the individual and not about a community. Racism is about the experience of the individual, although they acknowledge that this experience is also formed through the influence of institutions.
2. CRT does not acknowledge the colonization of the mind and presumes that each voice of people of color is a voice that is conscious about what racism, and oppression is. Therefore, it is not able to distinguish between what Malcolm X calls the “house negro” and the “field negro”.

Four points of critique of DTM - 2

3. CRT links racism to one specific form, biological racism and therefore is not able to position biological racism vis-à-vis theological and cultural racism. Its critique of biological racism is limited to the social construct of race and does not take culture and theology into consideration.
4. The conceptualization of racism is along the lines of inequality, not along the lines of superiority/inferiority. It is more about discrimination along lines of class, color, gender than about superiority-inferiority.

Marxist concept of racism

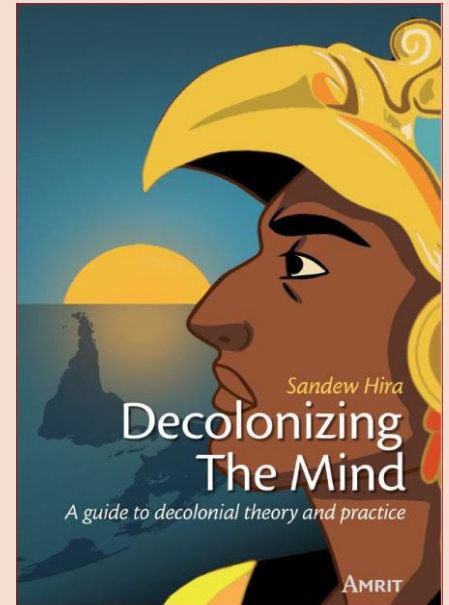
- ❑ Marxism is based on class analysis. The main goal of mankind is liberation from capitalism. The capitalists use different mechanisms to divide the working class and rule. The promotion of religious (ethnic) identity is such a mechanism. It goes against class consciousness. Racism is a mechanism to divide the working class.
- ❑ Black Marxist have dealt more with race and racism, but at the end of the day they stucked to class analysis.

A DTM critique of Marxism

A critique of the theoretical framework of Marxism (future sessions),
part of Eurocentrism

Source in the DTM book

- Chapter six
- Download the PDF of the PowerPoint on www.sandewhira.com



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