



The Home We Live In

Hard to believe, but school is just around the corner. With the new school year approaching, there has been a great deal of discussion centering around Critical Race Theory (CRT), especially in my state of Arizona.

A big part of my job as a middle school teacher is to make complicated and controversial subjects easier to understand. In that vein, allow me to examine the importance, relevance, and necessity of Critical Race Theory through an illustration.

You have a home.

It is the home you were born in.

It is the home that was built by your ancestors and that has been passed down to you, from generation to generation.

It is a good home. One to be proud of.

At the beginning (way before you were born), your home was built upon a foundation of strong ideas and technique. It was built with the tools and knowledge of that time. It was built to be strong and to last.

Many, many years later, the home now belongs to you. But, while your home still retains its original design, it has started to settle and show its age.

The foundation has shifted.

Cracks are forming in the walls; paint is peeling, exposing textures from behind that you may not have been aware were there since the construction of your home. This is your home, and it would be silly to feel guilty about the state of your current home, unless you choose to ignore the disrepair. It would be pointless to feel anger toward your ancestors for how they built your home. For better or worse, they did the best they could with what they had at the time.

But now the house belongs to you...and your home is no longer up to modern code! To do nothing, to leave your home just as it was originally built is to acknowledge that you live in a home that will no longer stand on its original foundation, and that you have made the choice to ignore the fixes needed.

If your home is to remain standing, then your home is in need of strong repair. In his 2 July 2021 Time article: Loving Your Country Means Teaching Its History Honestly, David French explains that, "...patriotism [and pride] is conditioned on a sense of national home and national community, and the obligations we owe each other to create a more just land."

An old home frequently needs modern repairs. From simple patch jobs to full buttressing of the foundation, we are obliged to bring our home up to code so that it can stand and weather the modern years, so that it fits properly within the neighborhood rather than standing out like an antiquated eyesore, and so that it will remain in good condition for the future when our children inherit the home we made.

Critical Race Theory is the modern repair that is needed, right now, to shore up our home. It does not change our home; it just improves the structure. It permits us to see how our home was originally built (where the foundational cracks are) so that we can fix what needs to be fixed. The original home remains; the only shame we face is by ignoring the cracks.

After all, one source of pride in our home means that we would rather see it featured in Better Homes & Gardens than on a "We Buy Ugly Homes" billboard.

Right now, we have many dedicated people – social sub-contractors, if you will – knocking on our door, clipboard in hand, pointing to the cracks in our foundation. People like: Gordon A. Allport, Amanda Gorman, John Howard Griffin, Michelle Alexander, Emmanuel Acho, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Sandra Cisneros, Ibram X. Kendi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Jesmyn Ward, Natalie Diaz, Jason Reynolds, Tressie McMillan Cottom, Calvin Terrell, and Nikole Hannah-Jones.

It's time to open the door and let them in so they can show us how to fix our home.